











**THE BELGIANS AT HOME**







ACROSS THE SCHELDT, ANTWERP

# THE BELGIANS AT HOME

BY  
CLIVE HOLLAND  
AUTHOR OF "TYROL AND ITS PEOPLE"

WITH SIXTEEN PICTURES IN COLOUR BY  
DOUGLAS SNOWDON  
AND TWENTY OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS FROM  
THE AUTHOR'S PHOTOGRAPHS

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## PREFACE

**I**N the following book the writer has not sought to provide "A History of Belgium," a purely architectural or archæological "guide" to its beautiful and historical buildings, or a detailed treatise upon its world-famed art treasures. There are already many volumes which cover separately and fully all these aspects of the country and its possessions.

The present volume deals with Belgium and its people from the point of view of a Rambler who has at various times cycled and travelled many hundreds of miles along its highways and by-ways, and has sought to learn something of its past history, greatness, and romance, and to see many of its greatest architectural and art treasures in most of its known, and some of its comparatively unknown, towns and villages.

It is a record of things seen and impressions gained. An attempt to present within the compass of a single volume of reasonable length the Belgium of the past and of to-day, and something at least of its alluring charm, picturesqueness, and extraordinary interest for the tourist and the student, whether of history, art, or character.

Every care has been taken with the spelling of proper names, and to verify dates. But it need not be pointed out to the experienced archæologist or historian that often these are conflicting. A standard authority has been followed in each case, and the author trusts, therefore, that in this respect there will be very few errors discoverable.

For those readers who wish to specialize or to pursue any of the subjects touched upon in the present volume, in greater

detail, the following works (some of which are quoted or referred to in the text) will doubtless prove of interest.

*L'Histoire de l'Architecture en Belgique*, par M. Schaeys; "Great Masters," by Sir William Martin Conway; *L'Histoire Constitutionnelle de la Ville de Bruges*, par M. Gheldorf; that old but excellent volume *La Vie des Peintres Flamands*, par Jean Baptiste Descamps; "Sacred and Legendary Art," by Mrs. Jameson; "Rubens," by S. L. Bensusan; "Memlinc," by W. H. J. and J. C. Weale; "Franz Hals," by Edgcumbe Staley; "Van Dyck," by Percy M. Turner; "Rembrandt," by Josef Israels (all in the "Masterpieces in Colour" Series); "The Cathedrals and Churches of Belgium," by T. Francis Bumpus; "Architectural Grandeur," by Wild; "The Church in the Netherlands," by Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, M.A., F.S.A.; "Handbook of Gothic Architecture," by the same; "Netherlands," in "National Churches Series," by the same; "Beauties of Continental Architecture," by John Coney; *Légendes de la Meuse*, by De Nimal, and "The History and Topography of Belgium," by N. G. Van Kampen.

CLIVE HOLLAND

BRUGES

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THE BELGIANS AT HOME



# THE BELGIANS AT HOME

## CHAPTER I

THE STORY OF BELGIUM FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES  
DOWN TO THE PRESENT DAY

THE earliest history of the country which we know now under the name of Belgium is—like that of many another—lost in the mists of antiquity. But it is at least more or less certain that the first inhabitants were of Frankish race, and crossed the Rhine in the third century, settling in the district known as Toxandria, which extended in those days from the neighbourhood of Maastricht for a distance of about fifty miles along the Meuse and between it and the lower Rhine, covering a district where now stand Antwerp, Breda, and Bois-le-Duc. In the case of the Franks they, in succeeding years after their first settlement, advanced steadily from the left bank of the Rhine, and though they were checked by the Romans under Julian in his victory of Toxandria he did not succeed in driving them back, and notwithstanding his successes in arms left them in possession of the country between the Scheldt and Maas, which they had already seized.

Earlier in their history during the third century these same Franks had proved themselves a thorn in the flesh to the Roman Emperors on account of their astonishing boldness, and their maritime adventurings. But with the fourth century they appear to have become almost entirely attached to the land of which they had possessed themselves, having, it would seem, largely abandoned their former methods of piracy for the cultivation of the rich soil and less maritime pursuits. They had, as a matter of fact, been driven back



by the Saxons, who formed another of the recently founded confederations of Teutonic peoples out of which nations were destined to spring.

In these ancient times the Franks appear to have become rather the masters of the Romans (holding as it were the balance) than allies as we now understand the term.

By the reign of Honorius the Franks had extended their territory, and were firmly established in Gaul, so that the hapless Roman province became from the Meuse and the Rhine to the shores of the Mediterranean itself a vast battlefield rich in plunder and therefore attractive to the predatory instincts of the Frankish pirates and other similar tribes.

The best that the Roman generals, Ætius among the number, could do was to set the barbarians fighting amongst themselves in the hope, apparently, that they would exterminate each other. And as though to make the history of these years for unfortunate future historians more complicated and confused, and to prove what a disorganized and wasted province Gaul had become, the Frankish tribes fell out among themselves, and were at the Battle of Chalons in A.D. 451 found fighting on opposite sides. In this horrible conflict, noted for its colossal slaughter, the fate of Gaul hung in the balance—whether it should pass to the Huns or to tribes a little less barbarous than they. The battle, which was its last great victory, cost the Roman Empire dear.

Exhausted by the campaign, and in reality now placed under the heel of its allies, it fell upon evil times; so that the real rulers of Gaul at this period were the Visigoths, who, with their headquarters at Tolosa, the present-day Toulouse, held the southern part firmly. The Franks had possessed themselves of the northern, and the Burgundians of the eastern, portions of Gaul. Ultimately the former conquered the other tribes, and divided the whole of Gaul between the sons of their kings. We have only to do with the latter, who ultimately founded the kingdom of the Frankenric, or Freeland, afterwards evolved into France as we now know it, to which for many centuries Flanders and the greater part of Belgium was attached.

The history of the Franks and the Flemish is for several centuries so confused and complicated that Gregory of

Tours, the famous historian and writer, who lived from A.D. 539-595, does not mention Pharamond, of whom the French historians have written so much, and who has figured so largely in historic romance. The authorities who refer to Chlodion and Meroveus cannot be said to be above suspicion when they write of them as being sole rulers of the Franks from 430 till 448. Even Gregory, though living comparatively so soon after this period, appears to be uncertain about them.

The Childeric, who is, after all, the earliest certainly known ruler of the branch of the Franks which took up their headquarters at Tournacum, or Tournai, in West Flanders, was a remarkable man, gifted with an equally astonishing wife, and a famous son, Clovis. He was ultimately banished by his people on account of his disgraceful gallantries, and fled to the barbaric Court of Basinus, King of the Thuringians, and was received by this ruler and his wife, Basina, with open arms. Adversity is said to make strange bed-fellows ; and certainly in ancient and medieval times it made strange companions. The Thuringians had not so very long before fought at the Battle of Chalons on the side of the defeated Attila, and in their retreat had passed through the country of Childeric, perpetrating in their rage the most abominable cruelties upon all the Franks they came across or who were unfortunate enough to fall into their hands. In an old chronicle we find they murdered those sent or taken as hostages, and put to death hundreds of young maidens by the most fiendish tortures, of which the searing of their flesh and breasts with burning torches, and the casting of them under the heavy chariots and commissariat waggons, so that their limbs and bodies should be crushed to pulp, were not the most cruel. But when fleeing from the wrath of his tribesmen Childeric appears to have forgotten these barbarous deeds of Basinus' people in the past !

After an absence of eight years, during which his tribe was governed by Egidius, the so-called Roman General, Childeric was recalled. But scarcely had he once again taken up the reins of government of his people than Basina, the wife of his recent protector, appeared upon the scene and announced her intention of marrying him. So impressed was Childeric by her (she having frankly given as her reason for following him that he was the most gallant,

bravest, and handsomest man she had ever met, and that, were she to meet anyone superior nothing would restrain her from leaving Childeric in turn for the new lover) that he consented to marry her. It should be mentioned that several of the chroniclers of those far-away times ascribed magical powers to this lady who had (so they also say) been the mistress of Childeric while he was accepting the hospitality and protection of Basinus, her husband! On the night of their marriage, so the legend goes, she persuaded Childeric to go into the courtyard of the palace at Tournai in order that he might see "the wonderful phantoms which would present themselves."

The King, no doubt wishful to humour her, went in all three times. On the first occasion he saw in procession before him a long line of unicorns, lions, and leopards, all silent and impalpable as shadows, although evidently fighting and wrangling together. On the second time, the animals were bears and wolves; these, too, fought and gambolled silently. On the third visit to the dimly lit courtyard of his palace, Childeric saw multitudes of dogs of great size and wonderful colours, accompanied by cats that always kept their heads turned backwards over their shoulders. From the varied characteristics of the animals which had appeared thus mysteriously before him, Childeric was told he must read the qualities of the races which would ultimately spring from his union with Basina.

In due time Basina gave birth to Clovis, who was destined to play so great a part in the world's history of his time. Childeric died in 481, and was buried in Tournai, to the strange discovery of whose grave and its treasures we shall refer later.\*

Clovis, the son of Childeric, came to the throne of his people at the age of fifteen, and at the age of twenty he led the combined forces of the Salic Franks, who had at first inhabited the banks of the Yessel, then taken possession of the Island of Betuwe—now a fertile region lying between the Waal and the Lek—and finally possessed themselves of the district lying between the Scheldt, Maas, and lower Rhine. The whole fighting force, at the head of which Clovis placed himself, did not probably amount to more than 5,000 men. His object was to unite with the

\* P. 121.



army of Ragnacar, the Frankish King of Cambrai, in an attack upon Siagrius, who was in command of the Roman militia at Soissons. The latter was defeated with great slaughter near his camp at Nogent. So fell the last pretender to the authority of Rome in Gaul.

The policy of the victorious Clovis was to stand well with the Bishops and other Christian authorities; and, indeed, until he himself had become a Christian but comparatively little is known of his life or exploits. When this came to pass Clovis supported the orthodox Christian ecclesiastics, and with his tribesmen became their militant ally against the Arian heretics, who were even less tolerated by the Bishops than the pagans themselves, heresy always being held by the Church of Rome as a greater sin than ignorance. Clovis cleverly managed to be credited by his people as holding their pagan beliefs whilst a Christian himself, and treating the Christians well.

He ultimately married that bright and particular star of sainthood among the many saints of blood royal of France, Ste. Clotilde, Ste. Clotildis, or Ste. Clotilda, as she is variously called. She was one of the daughters of Chilperic, the younger brother of Gundobald of Burgundy. Clovis, hearing of the great beauty of Clotilde, sent a messenger to discover what manner of woman she really might be. The story goes that this ambassador lay in wait to see Clotilde outside the church door from which she used to issue forth giving alms to all the needy. So overcome was the ambassador by her great and surpassing loveliness and nobility of mien that he fell on his knees, and when she extended her hand, supposing that he—being disguised as a beggar—like the rest, would receive of her charity, Clovis' messenger seized the out-stretched hand, and, turning back the wide sleeve, kissed the bare flesh of her wrist. Astonished at this action, Clotilde, on returning home, and being given to a belief in portents and omens, sent for the man and inquired the reason of his strange conduct.

Aurelian, for such was the name of Clovis' messenger, forthwith disclosed his errand, and drew forth from his cloak the royal presents intended for Clotilde should she be as beautiful as reported. In the end, with pretended reluctance, she expressed her willingness to become the bride of Clovis, and the marriage took place. Perhaps Clotilde

was not altogether insensible of the credit which would be hers if she succeeded in converting her pagan husband to the Christian faith. The wedding took place at Soissons in 493, and Clotilde was allowed free liberty to exercise her own religion.

During her married life with Clovis, Clotilde never ceased to implore him to embrace Christianity sincerely, but, the chroniclers tell us, without effect, until after the Battle of Tolbiac, which was fought in 496. Then, in the heat of the battle (so the old story goes), Clovis lifted up his hands on high, and invoked the God of his Queen, vowing to become a Christian should the victory remain with him. He won the battle, and after instruction in the elements of the Christian faith by St. Remi himself, was baptized in Rheims Cathedral at Christmas in the same year. In connection with this event it is recorded that the holy oil of anointment was brought by a dove direct from heaven to the hands of St. Remi at the moment of baptism.\* This oil, which had the miraculous gift of reproducing itself whenever it was afterwards needed for the coronation of a French king, was for many centuries preserved in a golden vessel at Rheims.

From that time onward, notwithstanding he had married Clotilde, whose influence could only have been for good, he set himself to ensure for his successors the Frankish throne and dominions. He stopped at no crime or act of treachery to accomplish this, and several neighbouring princes and petty kings who stood in the way of his schemes were slain or otherwise removed. One by one the descendants of the race of Meroveus were put to death or driven into exile, and the Frankish power consolidated in one ruler's hands. France came to birth, a kingdom, let it be noted, of far wider extent than that of to-day. Pursuing his policy of friendliness to the ecclesiastics, he gave liberally to the Church, and they in return reckoned him as among the saints. He was buried in the Church of Ste. Genevieve, which he had founded jointly with Clotilde when he had removed his court to Paris.

She survived her husband, and lived to see him succeeded

\* It should be mentioned that one Hincmar, a successor of St. Remi at Rheims, is believed to have invented the whole of this story of miraculously given oil in the ninth century, nearly 400 years later.—C. H.



by the son of a concubine whom he had taken before his marriage with her. Her own three sons, Chlodimir, Childebert, and Chlotaire, reigned at Orleans, Paris, and Soissons respectively; and the children of the first named were murdered by their uncles, from whom their mother, Clotilde, cut herself off in consequence of their atrocious wickedness. She appears to have spent most of the remaining years of her life at Tours in acts of charity and other good works, "forgetting that she was a queen, and seeming only to remember that there were poor and afflicted whom she could help." She died in 545 on June 3, and that day is still kept as a festival in the Roman Catholic Church.

On the death of Clovis, Chlotaire took of the Frankish kingdom what is practically modern Belgium, with the exception of Liège, which fell to the share of Thierry, the eldest son. In the course of a few years the entire realm came into the possession of Chlotaire, who without scruple had murdered his brothers and their sons to enable him to possess himself of the whole inheritance. His own son, Chramna, rebelled against him, and although the former obtained the assistance of the Bretons, he was defeated and put to flight. Of this event the chronicler, Gregory of Tours, writes: "He (Chramna) took to flight, but whilst awaiting ships for himself and his family, he was taken captive, and brought before his father. Chlotaire ordered that he should be burned alive with his wife and daughters. In pursuance of this sentence Chramna was tied on a bench in a poor man's cottage with strips of cloth taken from the altar of a church hard by, his family being also secured. Then the house was set on fire, and the unfortunate captives were burnt to death."

Chlotaire, however, was not destined to long survive this last act of diabolical cruelty. He died just a year and a day from the commission of the crime, shrieking out in his egotism: "What must be the King of all Heavens who thus kills the great kings of the earth?"

It is interesting to take note of this state of society, in which crimes of the most atrocious nature—rapine, murder, and destruction—play so great a part. And for this reason. Doubtless on account of it arose with great rapidity the conventual and monastic systems, where under direct pro-

tection of the Church some sort of security and safety, if not of property at all events of the person, could be obtained. These institutions flourished under monastic rule, and in consequence the whole of the Frankish dominions, including, of course, the area covered by the present-day Belgium, became thickly sown with institutions, in which men and women might enjoy a peace, security, and sense of repose which was in striking contrast to the turmoil, horror, and crime of the outside world which marked the policy of early Merovingian rulers.

On the death of Chlotaire the kingdom which he had committed so many crimes to consolidate was once more divided. The future of that part which approximates to Belgium of to-day is, however, the only portion with which we need really concern ourselves. This fell to the share of Chilperic I., who reigned from Soissons. He appears to have been of a good-natured, easy-going disposition ; much better than his father, but not nearly so popular with the ecclesiastics of his day on account of the desire he exhibited to annul some of the rich bequests made by Chlotaire and others to the clergy. He is stated to have incessantly grumbled that—" No one really rules save these priests ; see how everything goes to the churches."

In 575 Chilperic was besieged at Tournai by his brother Sigebert in consequence of the putting to death of Galeswintha (sister of his wife, Brunehault) whom Fredegonda, the wife of Chilperic, had hated and caused to be slain. Sigebert was on the road against his brother when St. Germain came to him and besought him to pause and not seek to slay Chilperic ; saying : " O King Sigebert, if you go put aside any aim to kill thy brother. If you do this you will be victorious and return alive. But if not, then you will fail, and also yourself die. For the Lord hath said, ' Whoso diggeth a pit for his brother, shall fall into it himself.' "

Sigebert paid no heed to this exhortation and advanced against Chilperic and Fredegonda, who were shut up in Tournai. The latter devised a scheme characteristic of the age by which they might escape. She told off two devoted retainers to go to Sigebert's tent and murder him. This they did, but were themselves cut to pieces. The death of their leader discouraged the besiegers, who retired. Chil-

peric came out from Tournai, and afterwards caused his brother's body to be magnificently interred at Lambres-sur-le-Scarfe. The incidents of the interment are depicted in the windows of Tournai cathedral. Chilperic and Fredegonda lived for some years longer, the latter intent upon committing a series of almost inconceivably revolting crimes ; amongst which the assassination of St. Praetextatus, Archbishop of Rouen, whilst he knelt at prayer in the choir of the cathedral, stands out as one of the blackest.

It is impossible to go fully into the details of the history of Fredegonda, who was a peasant's daughter and whose crimes would have made a Messalina blush, or into the romance which attached to the circumstances leading up to the murder of the Archbishop. But our readers who may wish to understand the period, and to read a story which is of almost inconceivably dramatic character, cannot do better than obtain the Merovingian novels of Thierry.

Chlotaire II. of Soissons, son of Chilperic I., who became King of all the Franks, inherited much of the savage nature of his mother, Fredegonda. Unfortunately, his aunt Brunehault fell into his hands, and after having her fiendishly tortured, he caused her to be torn in pieces by wild horses. Chlotaire II. was succeeded in 628 by his two sons, Dagobert and Charibert. The former proved on the whole the best and most powerful of the Merovingian sovereigns. Pepin of Landen, who, coming from Liège, may be justly called a Belgian, and Pepin of Heristal, the yet more powerful ruler who not only founded the Carlovingian family, but conquered Friesland, came from the banks of the Meuse. From the last named sprang Charles Martel, who in 752 shut up the last feeble descendant of Clovis in the then magnificent monastery of St. Bertin (at that time dedicated to St. Martin), at St. Omer. Here a year later died out the race of Childeric, which had had its birth in the cloisters of St. Bertin, not far distant from the town of Tournai, at which place the family had begun to flourish and held its court.

Pepin le Bref was succeeded by Carloman in 752, who in turn was followed in 770 by his brother Charlemagne, destined to become one of the most famous monarchs of early Christendom.



Under this new monarch a new order was instituted that to a certain extent separated the Walloon, Flemish, and Dutch provinces from each other, but which in the end was the means of consolidating his kingdom. The sections into which Charlemagne divided his inheritance—his power and supremacy extended over the whole area of the Netherlands—were placed under the rule of vassal-princes, dukes, or military governors, whose acts and conduct of affairs were overlooked periodically by *missi dominici*, or viceregal judges, who travelled about the empire paying what we are told were surprise visits of investigation. This arrangement was in turn followed by the evolution of the commercial power which, new to Flanders, was destined ultimately to have the greatest effect upon the future of Europe, and even upon civilization itself.

Charlemagne probably recognized two things: firstly, that in those troublous times no one central ruler could adequately oversee a great kingdom, so he appointed vassal-princes responsible for the rule of their districts or provinces answerable to him: secondly, that commerce could not be properly developed under a distant king, but would have quicker and more permanent growth under local rulers who, though sufficiently strong to resist external and adverse influences, would yet not be so powerful as to render them independent of local aid, and the support of the sovereign lord. From this arrangement arose (amongst others) the powerful Counts of Flanders, who acknowledged Charlemagne as their sole head, and after him his successors.

The traders of the Flemish cities had, notwithstanding this, already attained some power; and the Church—as was her wont—had secured large areas of the country, which it must be frankly admitted were in many cases free from the greater and grosser evils of the age. As an example of the civil power of the Church, we may instance the great abbey of Nivelles, which had under its rule at this period and onwards for some centuries no less than fifteen thousand families. What this really meant in those early days when the country was, comparatively speaking, sparsely populated can be well understood.

The great contests and conflicting interests of the immediate future all centred round the question of the respective boundaries and spheres of influence of the

Frankish and Germanic peoples. The kings of France of the Carolingian and Capetian houses, with the Counts of Flanders as their supporting vassals, were pitted in succeeding generations against the German rulers, who had as their allies the Dukes of Lorraine and Brabant to help them. The history of succeeding ages shows how cleverly the Flemish Counts used the various fluctuations of fortune and the rolling ball of circumstance to aggrandize (at the expense of emperor, king, friend or foe) their own province. The terrible feuds and intrigues of the Fredegonda and Brunehault era were succeeded by more open but not less disastrous wars, and the question of supremacy under the Carolingian monarchs assumed quite as acute proportions, though the matter was in saner and more powerful hands, and the methods less savage and barbaric.

It was during this period that Flanders was formed. For the purposes of consideration the latter may be said to have approximated to the greater part of the area now known as Belgium, and for this reason attention may be centred on it and its vicissitudes rather than on other portions of the kingdom of Charlemagne. The great wars in which Flanders had played no unimportant part had been carried on in the so-called Flandre Gallicante, or the Gallic provinces south of the Meuse—in fact, in France itself. In the lower lands the state of affairs was decidedly better, and more settled than formerly and than elsewhere.

Soon after Charlemagne's time the cities of Bruges, Antwerp, Ghent, and Courtrai amongst others had considerable commerce, and carried on large manufactures, and in course of time they banded themselves together for mutual support of trade interests and protection against fire and inundation and assault from other nations.

The comparatively close proximity of these towns to one another and to others suggested this arrangement, and it was not till later on, when the interests of the towns in question began to clash as the development of their manufactures and commerce came about, that they in several instances became bitterly opposed. In course of time, by means of the trade associations or guilds they obtained and carried on a kind of Republican or independent form of government. And in the ensuing centuries these guilds served frequently to check the policy of aggression of the Emperors of Germany,

Kings of France, and Counts of Brabant and Flanders. After Charlemagne died the various vassal-princes and dukes whom he had appointed to rule over certain divisions of his empire under him, recognizing that their appointments were not in reality hereditary, contrived by fair means or foul to make their official estates personal property.

On the division of the possessions of Charlemagne amongst his grandsons after his death, Flanders fell to the share of Charles the Bald of France; and, with however considerable amount of liberty in the management of its internal affairs, remained attached to the French crown for many centuries.

The most ancient rulers or earls or counts of Flanders with which we are chiefly concerned bore the peculiar title of "Foresters," the reason for which is, so far as we have been able to discover, untraceable. It is, however, distinctly suggestive of the nature of the country over which they ruled. The Flemish historians trace the descent of these "Foresters" from Lyderic to Baldwin Bras de Fer, who received the title of Count from Charles the Bald. Baldwin was a man of astonishing strength, stature and audacity; and married a daughter of Charles named Judith, who had been successively the widow of Ethelwulf and of Ethelbald his son, Kings of the West Saxons.

She caused herself to be abducted by Baldwin in 862. Her father was greatly incensed by this—as he had been by the many scandals which the wayward princess had caused—and threatened vengeance upon his daughter. But the Church, mindful once again of its material interests, stepped in to smooth matters over, and Charles ultimately forgave the sinners, and, as a sequel, created Baldwin Count of Flanders. It is interesting to note that it was this Judith, wife of Baldwin Bras de Fer, who taught Alfred, afterwards one of the greatest of English monarchs, to read. The young prince had accompanied Ethelwulf, the King of the West Saxons, on his pilgrimage to Rome, and the two had visited the court of Judith's father, Charles the Bald, on the way back.

Bras de Fer's successor, Baldwin II., married Alfrith, a daughter of Alfred the Great, in 891, thus linking English with Flemish history. He proved a great and successful ruler of Flanders, inflicting at various times heavy defeats



upon the Normans, and building the walls of Bruges and Ypres. He was the first of a long line of Flemish princes to be interred, in 919, in the Church of St. Pierre at Ghent.

Then came Arnulf, who fought with Otho of Germany over the question of the boundaries of Flanders on the Brabant frontier. He was succeeded by his son, Baldwin III. (who had ruled for him some years prior to his death), in 964. This Count reigned only a little over three years, but in that time rebuilt and restored several towns and cities which had been pillaged and destroyed by the fierce Norman invaders. Arnulf II., who came after him, distinguished himself by seizing and carrying off the relics of St. Valery from St. Valery-sur-Somme to St. Omer.

In consequence of this act the legend goes that the saint himself appeared to Hugues Capet, Duke of Paris, calling upon him to undertake the recovery and restoration of the relics. In the event of his accomplishing this the saint promised that the descendants of Hugues should be Kings of France until the seventh generation should have passed away.

An ancient chronicle states: "Hugues readily obeyed the command of St. Valery, and by the will of God and his own valour so terrified the wrong-doer that he surrendered the relics." The story goes on to say that the saint duly performed his part of the bargain. Arnulf II., known as "The Young," in distinction to his father, who had been known as "The Old," died in his city of Ghent in 989, and was buried in the Church of St. Pierre.

He was succeeded by his son Baldwin IV., known as "Fine Beard." This ruler wrested Valenciennes and the Islands of Zealand from the Emperor of Germany in 1006. He died in 1036, and was also buried in St. Pierre. His son Baldwin V., the Debonnair, who succeeded him, had formerly quarrelled with his father, having married Adela, daughter of Robert, the French king. He was one of the most enterprising and successful rulers in the long line of the Counts of Flanders. And all of his four children became famous in their several ways.

Of them the most noted were his daughters, the elder Matilda, afterwards wife of William the Conqueror; and Judith, afterwards wife of Tostig, son of Earl Godwin, and brother of Harold II. of England, whom William of Normandy



defeated at the Battle of Hastings on October 14, 1066. Baldwin himself died just a year after that event, and was buried at Lille in the choir of the Church of St. Pierre, a place of honour reserved for founders. He had been the faithful and able guardian of Philippe, the young son of Henry, King of France, during his life, which, unhappily for that young monarch, did not last as long as the latter's minority.

Concerning Matilda, the Conqueror's wife, there is related by an ancient chronicler a pretty piece of scandal and gossip which throws a light upon the manners and morals of the period. It would appear that one Brintric Mawr, or the Handsome, came to her father's court in the capacity of an ambassador from Edward the Confessor (possibly with relation to the succession of the English throne), and Matilda fell in love with Brintric. To her lasting chagrin the latter refused her somewhat insistent advances. After the Conquest Matilda, remembering the slight put upon her, asked from William the grant of all the lands held by Brintric for her own; these, as the Domesday Book shows, she obtained, including amongst them the portion of Devon in which Clovelly is situated. At this date Matilda was but some fifteen years of age, and one can imagine the amusement with which the austere old warrior must have regarded this method of his young spouse of taking her revenge upon the suitor who had rejected her advances.

Baldwin V. was succeeded by his son of the same name, known as of Mons. He reigned only three years, but with so strong and firm a hand that his biographer says—"It was not needful for any man to close his house-door at night in order to keep out thieves." In those lawless days this cannot be considered as other than a great testimony of the firmness and wisdom of Baldwin's rule. Robert le Frison is supposed by some to have been Baldwin's elder brother, who was made to give way to him for diplomatic reasons, and, as husband of Richilde, Namur and Hainault became part of Flanders. Robert, whose life was a very adventurous and piratical one, eventually gained possession of Flanders and also lands in Friesland and what is now known as Holland.

Of Robert le Frison's alliance with Canute II., King of Denmark (afterwards made a saint), and the scheme of these two to invade England and take revenge on William

the Conqueror for not having paid some money owing to Robert we need not concern ourselves. Nor with other romantic and adventurous undertakings of him who might have been well called the Pirate. He died at Wyendael in 1093, and was succeeded by his son Robert II., called of Jerusalem, who accompanied the famous Godfrey de Bouillon to the Holy Land in 1096. He appears in the pages of many chroniclers of the period in which he lived, and in those of later writers, and is always given the character of a great fighter. He survived a desert march when we are told—"The hawks of the knights died upon their wrists, and the knights themselves sold their armour for a pittance rather than bear it with them any further." His was the hand supposed to have fired Antioch, when upwards of two thousand houses were burned, and he is stated, in company with other starving Crusaders, to have eaten the dead Saracens! He was at the taking of the Temple at Jerusalem when "soon the floor thereof ran a foot deep in blood."

He returned from the Holy Land in 1100, and died eleven years later in a manner little in keeping with his strenuous and romantic career. He fell from his horse when on an expedition to attack Theobald of Meux in company with the King of France, and was trampled under foot by the other horsemen who had been routed. He was buried with "great pomp and amid much sorrow by his faithful and adoring Flemings" in the church of St. Vedast at Arras.

His son Baldwin VII. succeed him. He was known as à la Hache because in war and peace he carried a hatchet, and displayed it as an emblem on his banner.

He was a firm and on the whole just ruler, and a dispenser on occasion of "rough justice." In an old chronicle we find that eleven knights had been proved guilty of robbing and murdering three Easterlings. Baldwin à la Hache summoned them to appear at the great hall of Wyendael, and there he himself stood them upon a table with halters tied round their several necks and attached to the great beams above them. Then, after admonishing them and reminding them of their crime, and that it was their duty to protect the weak, he with his own hands pulled away the table from underneath their feet, and left them to hang until they were dead.

Amongst other enterprises this Baldwin engaged in was a long struggle with Henry I. of England on behalf of the son of his old friend Robert Courthose, named William Clito—*i.e.*, the heir; Clito being the equivalent of Childe or Æthling. He had failed to obtain his inheritance from Henry. Baldwin received William as his guest, and by one of those strange turns of the wheel of Fortune the young man ultimately became the possessor of his host's dominions. The struggle against Henry of England proved unavailing, notwithstanding Louis of France, Charles le Bon; Baldwin and their great lords, Stephen, Count of Aumale, Aumari de Montfort, Count of Evreux, and many other puissant nobles were engaged in it.

Baldwin is supposed, in consequence of an illness, which took place at Roulers near Bruges in 1119, to have eventually become a monk, and entered the monastery of St. Bertin. At all events, he was buried there, and the monks claimed him as a "brother."

He appointed as his heir to the Countship of Flanders one Charles, a cousin, the son of Canute and of Adalais, daughter of Robert le Frison. "A very holy man," the old chroniclers call him.

It has often been said, and not without, we think, some truth, that unworldliness and impracticability in a ruler is often more disastrous than actual wickedness. Charles certainly caused through these qualities almost as much mischief as most of his more bloodthirsty and irreligious forerunners and contemporaries. He was murdered at Bruges in the Church of St. Donatian on March 2, 1127, in consequence of his having offended the merchants of the city, who had stored up quantities of corn in anticipation of a scarcity and consequent rise in price much as do the speculators in wheat of the present age. Exasperated by their Count's order that the granaries should be thrown open and the corn distributed, and refused a hearing when they appealed to him to rescind the decree, a body of the merchants—including, let it be noticed, the provost of St. Donatian himself, and the Chancellor of Flanders—came upon Charles, whilst he was at the foot of the altar engaged in prayer, and slew him. His murder was accomplished with greater suddenness and violence even than that of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury forty-one years afterwards.



It was this unhappy fate which gained for the Count the honour of sainthood, and the title of Charles the Good, Martyr.

His, be it said, was a strangely contradictory character, which the scanty chroniclers of his age have done little to elucidate. Part mystic, part saint, part soldier, he appears fitfully across the pages of European history of the time, seemingly with the Scriptures in one hand and the sword of his ancestors in the other.

Several claimants to the Countship of Flanders, or competitors for it, arose after the death of Charles. The most formidable of whom, and one with perhaps on the whole the best right, was William Clito, son of Robert Courthose, to whom reference has already been made. He was not only the grandson of Matilda of Flanders, but had the support of Louis the Fat, King of France (1108-1137), who was suzerain of the Countship.

Immediately after the death of Charles the Good, Count of Flanders, Louis the Fat, King of France, took steps to avenge the death of his vassal, and for this purpose appointed William Clito (now related to him by marriage) to the Countship. The Flemings rebelled against the appointment, favouring the pretensions of Thierry of Alsace. William was a strong man, and, moreover, had dealt very drastically with the traitors and assassins, causing more than a hundred of those concerned in the murder to be thrown from the top of the tower at Bruges.

Thierry, the son of Thierry, Duke of Lorraine, who had married Gertrude, third daughter of Robert le Frison, invaded Flanders. Many of the Flemings flocked to his standard, and it is also supposed that he received considerable assistance, at least in money, from the English King, Henry I. Thierry was, however, defeated by William, and driven back to Alcast, where he shut himself within the town and defied his enemy. In driving back a sally of the garrison, William Clito clasped the lance of a soldier, and the latter drawing the weapon back William's hand was cut. Septic poisoning set in, and resulted fatally on August 9, 1128. In connection with the death of William, so short a time ruler of Flanders, a strange story has been handed down. It would appear from the Chroniclers that his father, Duke Robert Courthose, was in England at Devizes, and somewhere

about the time of the wounding of his son dreamed that he himself was wounded in the hand by a lance, so that he appeared to lose the use of the limb. When he awoke in the morning, he is said to have remarked to those about him: "Alas! my son is dead." The news of William's death, we are told, did not reach him till some considerable time afterwards.

From this period, after the unfortunate William Clito had been laid to rest in the Abbey of St. Bertin, by the side of Robert le Frison, and near the grave of his good and true friend Baldwin à la Hache, the history of Flanders becomes less complicated and obscure. It should be remembered, too, that whilst the counts who ruled over the Flemings and those of adjacent districts and duchies were meting out a rough and uncoded type of justice, were marrying and giving in marriage; fighting in foreign wars; losing lands and acquiring them; living and dying after their several fashions; the great trading communities of the Low Countries were steadily emerging into power, wealth, and influence, and gathering to themselves liberties and privileges of which ensuing rulers found it extremely difficult and dangerous to attempt to deprive them. The foundation of the liberties of such towns as Ypres, Tournai, Courtrai, Lille, Bruges, Ghent (to mention only the most noted), is not for certain known. It is even possible that in some freedom was contemporaneous with the rise of the town, and possessed from the time when the first settlers upon the sand dunes and marshlands of Flanders of those far-off times gathered together for mutual protection and intercourse. Tournai, it is thought, was a city ere the Romans under Cæsar entered what is now known as Belgium.

It may be said regarding most of the other greater Flemish towns that they were by now almost like little Republican communities, governed by their own officials, and at times exercising a considerable influence upon the external affairs of even England and France.

In the time of Guy de Dampierre, who was ruler in 1280-1305, the close alliance in trade relations between Flanders and England was plainly indicated in the reply of the States with regard to the steps Guy wished to take to avenge his imprisonment by the French King, Phillippe III. "My



A CORNER OF A FLANDERS DAIRY FARM





lord," said these worthy merchant princes and traders, "we are merchants, and without the coming of the English to Flanders and the going of the Flemings into England, we cannot traffic to any advantage; let peace, therefore, be between your nation and theirs, and then, sustained by their assistance, we may despise the injuries already put upon us by the King of France, as well as others to which he may seek to subject us." Nor were the English unappreciative of the proposed alliance and the common-sense way in which the "States" of Flanders had of looking at matters. They sent (we are told) no less than 15,000 pounds weight of silver to assist the Flemings in fortifying their castles, and the good understanding existing in commercial matters between the merchants of England and those of Flanders was strengthened thereby.

During the Crusades the power and military forces of the nobles were, by death, absence, and the expenditure of vast sums upon the Crusades themselves, greatly weakened. The people began to take matters of government into their own hands, appointing their own magistrates, and obtaining the highly-valued privileges to erect the belfries which still remain as memorials of these early liberties in most of the large towns of Belgium to-day. They also acquired the right of self-defence, so that when attacked they could undertake reprisals without the assent of the Counts, or when aggrieved could undertake punitive expeditions against other towns. Tournai and Ghent were the first cities to erect their stone belfries, which like the great towers of Italian cities, symbolized freedom and power. Morning and evening their long shadows fell upon the citizens, toiling industriously, and upon the palatial houses of the merchant princes of the Middle Ages. Beneath this shadow—protective in its symbolism—the dwellers undoubtedly lived in and enjoyed more security and peace than was in those troublous times to be obtained elsewhere on the Continent.\* Around the belfries—whose sweet-toned chimes in times of peace rang out the hours of the fleeting day and slumberous nights, and from whose imposing height in times of war, revolt, or fire clanged down the terrifying and arresting notes of the alarm bells, great hives of men came into being; the toilers in which became

\* "Histoire de l'Architecture en Belgique."

wealthy and powerful, setting examples in their manufactures, methods of trade, and love of liberty, afterwards followed by Europe, and by which England herself profited not a little. Of the subsequent subjection of the Netherlands by Philip II. of Spain it may be remarked that had the inhabitants of the various great cities showed solidarity and fought side by side in the common cause, not all the power of the then powerful Spanish dominions could have accomplished what was brought to pass in regard to the overrunning of the country, and the infliction of the diabolical cruelties by which the inhabitants were decimated.

From the mists of war and bloodshed, out of the incredible cruelties of the Spanish occupation of the Netherlands, emerged at length phoenix-like from the ashes something of the old spirit and free institutions. But although this was so the cities had lost for ever much of their former prosperity and power.\*

Interesting as are the lives and romantic adventures of the Counts of Flanders who succeeded Thierry of Alsace, when crusading, warring against their neighbours, or when espousing the cause of their suzerains, there is no space to recount them in detail. A more or less abbreviated account of the names and claims of these must suffice us until that period when the great Burgundian inheritance (of which Flanders had by reason of the want of an heir male to the house of Brabant become a part) was split up.

Philippe, the son of Thierry and Sybilla of Anjou succeeded his father in 1168, and after "Taking the Cross" in the church of St. Pierre at Ghent went twice along the "Crusaders' road" to the assistance of his cousin, the King of Jerusalem. It should be noted that it was during the progress of his first voyage that Philippe changed the arms hitherto borne by the Counts of Flanders for a shield *or*, with a lion rampant *sable*. Philippe died before Ptolemais, on July 11, 1191, and was afterwards buried in the famous Cistercian Abbey of Clairvaux, in Champagne. He was succeeded by Baldwin VIII., who reigned only about three years in very troublous times. He was harassed by several competitors for the Countship, and died at Mons in 1194, where he lies buried in the Church of St. Waltruda. He added the province of Hainault to Flanders, and it was

\* See Motley's "Rise of the Dutch Republic."



to the greater inheritance that his son Baldwin IX. succeeded. This prince joined the Fourth Crusade in 1201, was chosen Emperor of the East three years later, and about a year afterwards suddenly vanished from human sight in a way that was almost more remarkable than that which characterized the disappearance of Sebastian of Portugal after the Battle of Alcazarquivir, in Africa, on August 4, 1578. Baldwin of Flanders was last seen on the battlefield, or just afterwards, and then never more.

He was succeeded by his daughter Jeanne, who was married to Fernand of Portugal. The latter refused to assist Philip Augustus in his scheme for the invasion of England and as a consequence incurred Philip's wrath. Fernand allied himself to the German Emperor and King John of England, and concerted an attack upon France which promised well. Philip Augustus sent a fleet to the Flemish coast, and this was attacked at Damme by the English fleet, and defeated. On land, however, Philip Augustus was more successful. Ypres, Courtrai, and Ghent were all in turn captured; and then, marching southwards, Philip Augustus encountered the forces of the Emperor, amounting in all to some 150,000 men, on July 27, 1214, at Bouvignes, between Lille and Tournai. After a most bloody battle Philip was victorious, capturing, amongst other important allies of the Emperor, Fernand himself and William Longsword, Earl of Salisbury. After fourteen years' imprisonment Fernand was released, but he only survived three or four years, and died in 1232. Jeanne, his widow, married a second time Thomas of Savoy. She died in 1244, and, leaving no child, was succeeded by her sister Margaret. The latter, who died in 1280, ruled Flanders with her two husbands, Bouchard d'Avesnes, and William de Bourbon, Lord of Dampierre. She was succeeded by her son, William de Dampierre, a most unfortunate prince. He reigned three years only, and was succeeded by Guy de Dampierre. The latter was even more unfortunate. He was a great friend of Edward I. of England; but the latter left him to the tender mercies of Philippe le Bel of France, who captured and imprisoned him at Compiègne, where he died in 1305. It was this Philippe of France who treated the citizens of Bruges so harshly that they revolted, and, attacking the French garrison, drove

them out of the city, and Jacques de Chatillon, the French governor, back to his master in France. The latter invaded Flanders with "all the flower of French chivalry and an immense following of common soldiers," but was disastrously defeated near Courtrai.

Re-entering the province, he succeeded in defeating the Flemings at Mons-en-Puelle, near Lille. But, notwithstanding the triumph of his arms, ultimately thought it policy to acknowledge the succession of Guy de Dampierre's son Robert as Lord of Flanders. The latter, a great and notable warrior, was succeeded by his son Louis.

It was under the rule of this prince that Flanders was the scene of the events which led to the rise of Jacques von Artevelde. Louis was slain at the famous Battle of Crécy, and was succeeded by his son, Louis de Maele, whose daughter Marguerite, by marrying Philippe, Duke of Burgundy, was the means of uniting Flanders to Burgundy in 1384. This was a branch of the ruling house of France, and at the beginning of the fifteenth century all the Netherlands provinces were united by inheritance, marriage, treaty, or purchase under the authority of the Dukes of Burgundy, who had become so powerful that they were able to defy the authority of the Kings of France and Emperors of Germany alike.

The real aim of the Burgundian Dukes at this period and onwards was the establishment of a State that should be independent of both France and Germany, and thus hold the balance of power between the undying rivalries of the reigning Kings and Emperors. The great obstacle to this scheme and the despotism of the Dukes was the democratic and municipal spirit of the great trading towns of Flanders—Ghent, Bruges, Liége, for example. It was just this spirit that the wily Louis XI. of France sought to foster and turn to his own uses. Readers of history and historical romance will recollect how at last Louis' life was endangered by his schemes when the premature revolt broke out at Liége against Charles the Bold, the Duke of Burgundy, whose guest at that particular moment Louis was at the fortress of Peronne.\*

Charles the Bold was killed at the battle of Nancy on January 5, 1477, and having no son it was the scheme of

\* See "Quentin Durward," by Sir Walter Scott.



the French King that Charles's daughter Mary should marry into the royal family of France, by which plan the great Duchy would, of course, have become absorbed.

On the death of Charles the Bold the Burgundian inheritance was dismembered, and Louis XI., finding his scheme to marry Mary into his family frustrated, seized upon those territories of the dead Duke which lay within the French border, and had been held by him of the French Crown, under the excuse that they were a male fief, and thus, for lack of heirs male, reverted to the French Crown. Mary ultimately married the Emperor Maximilian of Austria, one of the most powerful rulers of the time; and thus Flanders (with Burgundy) passed to the house of Habsburg.

In the year 1494 Maximilian gave the Duchy and the whole of the Netherlands to his son Philip, at whose death in 1507 Flanders fell to Charles V. of Austria, the grandson of Maximilian. Charles was by birth a Fleming, having been born in Ghent in 1500. He proved a great ruler, and generally throughout his reign favoured the Netherlands, the chief cities of which, in return for his respect of their liberties, contributed largely and generously towards the expenses of the wars in which the Emperor engaged. Once more a Burgundian ruler, in the person of this great Emperor Charles V. of Austria, aimed at setting up a vast and despotic power which should hold in check, not only the pretensions of Germany, but also those of France. The centre of the proposed balance of power was shifted a little eastward, that was all.

Notwithstanding his great gifts, his immense resources and possessions, and his vast ambition, Charles failed in his object. He neither checked the advances of France nor those more subtle forces of the Reformation which were aiming a deadly blow at despotism; nor did he succeed in bringing under his rule the independent princes of Germany. In the end he abdicated, worn out, 'tis said, by disillusionment and the strain of his unsuccessful policy. He sought, as did so many of his kind in those troublous days, rest within a monastery in 1555, and died in Spain.

When, afterwards, division came to be made of the vast possessions of Charles V., of whom one writer declares: "Half the world belonged to him, and yet he was weary of it all," what we now know as Belgium and Holland fell to

the share of his son, the famous Philip II. of Spain, the husband of Mary of England and deadly enemy of Elizabeth.

Philip was a much less wise ruler than his father, and much less favourable to the claims and liberties of the Netherlands. The free cities chafed and rebelled against his would-be despotism. The Reformation, too, had made great strides in the Low Countries, and Philip was a bigot of the harshest type. Indeed, he is said to have declared that he would rather wipe out the population of his Netherlands possessions than rule over a heretical people. He was bent upon stamping out Protestantism, and to do this the number of Roman Catholic officials, priests and prelates in Flanders was greatly increased, and the Inquisition in its cruellest form set up. The first result was discontent ; then open revolt.

Flanders, as a whole, declared against the Spanish rule and joined the "Pacification of Ghent" in 1576. To enable the rebels to be more easily crushed Margaret of Parma, Philip's half-sister, was removed from her position of regent over the Flemish provinces, and the infamous Duke of Alva was appointed in her place. The Duke commenced a reign of terror in Brussels, arresting two of the most popular of the native nobles—Lamoral, Count Egmont, and Philip de Montmorency, Count Hoorn. These were speedily executed, and hundreds of the citizens of Brussels and other large towns were put to death. Alva's diabolical cruelties, "by which the countryside was made one vast charnel-house, and gibbets were as thick as trees," roused the people to a titanic struggle against the Spaniards, which, though lengthy, was in the end successful.\* The northern States of the Netherlands obtained their freedom under the title of the Seven Provinces, and established the Dutch Republic. The southern provinces with Flanders submitted to Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma, to whose moderation and diplomacy this result must be ascribed. Philip thus succeeded in rooting out Protestantism in the southern provinces and Flanders, but the northern provinces maintained their religious as well as gained their political freedom.

Shortly before his death Philip, finding his Flanders possessions difficult to control, gave what is now Belgium

\* See Motley's "Rise of the Dutch Republic."



as a marriage portion to his daughter, the Infanta Isabella, who in 1598 married the Archduke Albert of Austria. Thus this part of Europe once more passed to the house of Habsburg. It soon, however, again became a possession of the Spanish crown. In the seventeenth century the country suffered with the decline of Spanish power, and also from the terrible wars with France and Holland, and at the Treaty of the Pyrenees, November 7, 1659, a considerable extent of Spanish territory, and the provinces of Thionville and Artois, became incorporated with France. In 1668 France acquired, by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (May 2), other important possessions, including the fortress of Lille. About ten years later some of them were restored. Shortly afterwards, however, Valenciennes, Cambrai, Nieuport, and other towns were taken from Belgium, and only restored in part twenty years later at the Peace of Ryswick, September 20, 1697.

The War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713) brought great hardships upon Belgium and the Netherlands. The field of battle was transferred after Blenheim from Germany to the Low Countries, and here were fought the famous engagements of Oudenarde and Ramillies. By the Treaty of Radstadt, March 6, 1714, when the great and disastrous war was ended, the Netherlands, and therefore Belgium, was once more given to Austria.

The country, however, was not destined to enjoy peace for any long period, for the War of the Austrian Succession broke out, and Belgium once more became a pawn in the game. For a period of four years, from the outbreak of the war to the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, France overran and conquered almost the whole of the country, but at the Peace things were adjusted almost as before, and Austria once again took possession.

It must be admitted that on the whole the Austrian rule of the country from the time of Charles V. compares very favourably with that of Spain; and no ruler was wiser, more pacific and more beloved of the Austrian house than the Empress Maria-Theresa. Her successor, the Emperor Joseph II., was less happy in his methods, though possibly equally well-intentioned. He somehow or other offended the religious and other scruples of his Flemish subjects, with the result that revolts occurred. He died in 1790, and



his successor, Leopold II. of Austria, had scarcely succeeded in repressing the discontent when Belgium, invaded by the French Revolutionary forces, once more became a battle-field.

The Revolutionary forces and then those of the Republic overran the country, and met with such success that Belgium was first elevated into the position of a separate Republic, with the Austrian yoke thrown off, and afterwards formally made over by Austria to France by the Treaties of Campo Formio and Lunneville. It was ultimately divided into departments and incorporated with the Empire of Napoleon Bonaparte. At the fall of the latter the country was placed once more under Austrian rule, but this not proving a success, by the Congress of Vienna the southern provinces constituting Belgium were united with the northern into a single kingdom of the Netherlands, under the rule of William, Prince of Orange, known as William I., King of the Netherlands.

The fact that in race and more especially in religion the two bodies now united were diametrically opposed was not promising for unity, and the new kingdom thus formed did not endure.

The Belgian portion of William's subjects objected to Dutch rule and Dutch customs, and became possessed of the idea that Belgium was being made subservient to Holland. One grievance in particular, which appears to have precipitated the agitation for separation, was the fact (as asserted by Belgium) that for its wealth and population it was inadequately represented in the Chamber of Deputies. The feeling was also expressed that the offices of state were given much more frequently to the Dutch than to the Belgians. Concessions, it is true, were from time to time somewhat ungraciously made; but the Belgians remained dissatisfied and discontented. This feeling of antagonism culminated in 1830, when it was shown by the Belgian deputies that the civil official classes were Dutch by a preponderance of about ten to one, whilst at the War Office in important posts the disproportion was about thirty to one. The Belgian Press took the matter up strongly; then there followed prosecutions of editors, publishers, journalists, prominent officials; and popular leaders of the Pan-Belgian movement were exiled by the Netherlands Govern-



OSTEND FISHING FLEET IN HARBOUR



ment, or voluntarily fled the country to France, from whence they engineered the movement for the formation of Belgium into a separate kingdom.

In July of the same year there came the Revolution in Paris and the overthrow of Charles X. On August 25, a performance was given at the Théâtre du Monnaie, Brussels, of the "La Muette de Portici," which tells the story of the revolt of Naples under the leadership of Masaniello. A riot followed, the Government journal offices were attacked and pillaged, and a redress of the grievances of Belgians demanded. The authorities of the Hague temporized, promised consideration, but actually did little, and a movement that commenced in a riot ended in a revolution. In September there were four days of fierce fighting in the streets of Brussels, and the Dutch soldiery were beaten and compelled to retreat. The appointment of a provisional government was at once proceeded with. Both Great Britain and France intervened, and after negotiations Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg was elected King of the Belgians, and made his triumphal entry into Brussels, the capital of the new kingdom, on July 19, 1831. The King of Holland still sought to rule Belgium, and war broke out on August 3. France sent 50,000 troops to the aid of the Belgians. The quarrel between the Netherlands and Belgium continued spasmodically until after a conference of the Powers held in London in 1839 although Holland had been prevailed upon to recognize the independence of Belgium by the pressure of the Powers, more especially that of Great Britain, in 1832.

Since that period Belgium has been governed with a full recognition on the part of her rulers of the liberties of the people, and with a Constitution modelled very considerably upon the lines of our own.

Leopold I. had a long and prosperous reign, and it is a notable fact that when in 1848 Europe was convulsed by revolutions, his was one of the few Continental thrones which remained unshaken. He was the uncle, and in her early years the adviser, of Queen Victoria, and as a truly constitutional monarch, in 1848, when revolution was rife and there were signs of discontent amongst a section of his own people, he came to the Assembly, and declared that he had been called to the throne of Belgium by the voice of the



people, and should they bid him go he would do so. He remained firm upon his throne when those of other monarchs, apparently more powerful than he, were tottering.

He was succeeded in 1865 by his son (the late King of the Belgians), Leopold II., who, on August 22, 1853, had married the Princess Marie Henriette, daughter of the Archduke Joseph of Austria. He became in 1885 the sovereign of the Congo Free State, the maladministration of which brought obloquy upon the King and his officials. He died on December 17, 1909, and was succeeded by his nephew, the present King, Albert, who married Elizabeth, Duchess of Bavaria, in 1900.

Under her three kings, since she has become a separate State, Belgium has prospered enormously. In Art, Trade, Commerce, and Manufactures she has taken and won for herself an important place in the ranks of European nations; quite, let it be added, out of proportion to her area and population. Before her, unless the menacing shadow of the German Eagle causes her material prosperity to be at first overcast, and then herself to be absorbed, the future is bright. The motto of Belgium—"L'Union fait la Force,"—has hitherto proved apposite and true, and it may yet serve her once again in good stead.



## CHAPTER II

### THE MEN AND WOMEN OF BELGIUM

**A**FTER several sojourns in Belgium, and an acquaintance more or less intimate with its people, one is compelled to admit that in the past at least the latter have met with scant justice at the hands of English journalists, writers, and tourists. More especially is this remark true concerning the last named. It is so much more easy to criticize than to admire a Continental people: for criticism is a comparatively easy matter, and is often based upon ignorance, while appreciation can only come when one comprehends and possesses a sympathy with the aims and objects, customs and life, of the people.

The average tourist sees little or nothing of the real life of Belgium, nor does he get in touch with the modes of thought which prevail, nor the intimate life of the people at large. For many Ostend, Bruges, and Ghent (the two latter often voted slow and uninteresting), Brussels, Antwerp, the Valley of the Meuse, and perhaps Liège, comprise, and often more than comprise, the ground covered, and even that is done at too rapid a rate to enable the travellers to acquire any real knowledge of the land or its people.

Ostend is no more Belgium than Monte Carlo is France. Indeed, we should be inclined to say that the "vicious, brilliant, fascinating and cosmopolitan watering-place" is less so. The true and most strenuous life of Belgium is lived in the solid, old-time mansions of the great towns, in the manufactories, which have made the country prosperous in the past as they do in the present; in the coal-mines of "the Borinage," the steel and iron foundries of the Charleroi district; in the fields of the fertile valleys such as those of the Meuse, Sambre, Scheldt and Lys; on the plains

of West Flanders; and amid the beautiful forests of the Ardennes. In these one finds the ever varied types which go together to the making of a nation—fascinating studies of complicated humanity well worth the time which is necessary to comprehension.

In considering some of the more common types of the men of the towns, it may not be out of place to commence with those *gardiens de la paix*, the policemen. We have seen in our own and in Parisian comic papers jokes regarding the size and conduct of the Belgian policeman, which in our opinion, after watching them in the execution of their duty, and having recourse to them in times of difficulty or embarrassment, are for the most part totally undeserved. As a general rule, he is like his brother of the Paris streets, urbane, gentle and courteous to women and children, and brave in the execution of his often perilous duties. He is not, we admit, the same impressive, not to say massive, individual that "Robert" in London is—the Belgians are a smaller race—but he is wonderfully active and courageous. We have heard it stated by a high official that London has the least dangerous and ruffianly type of criminals of any capital city in Europe. We are of the opinion that Brussels has some of the worst type of all. Desperate criminals, who have fled from Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and other lesser Continental cities reinforce those of native birth. Most, too, of the members of the criminal class in Brussels carry revolvers and formidable knives as a general rule, and do not hesitate to use them on very slight provocation, or when in danger of arrest. The "Apaches" of Brussels are not less desperate and stealthy desperadoes than those of Paris, and scarcely a month passes without some deadly affray being reported as having taken place between couples or bands of these and the police of the Belgian capital and large manufacturing towns.

Brussels—"Paris in little," as it has been called—is literally a refuge for those who flee from justice. But it speaks well for the police that criminals of the worst and most desperate type seldom long escape, and that murders, burglaries, and similar crimes remain unsolved far less frequently than in London.

The Brussels policeman, too, is often a remarkably well-trained athlete, and to see him stop a runaway horse in one

or other of the parks where the animal has had an opportunity to bolt, with few obstacles in the way to arrest its progress, is a wonderful sight. Indeed, if any certificate of courage were required the Brussels policeman is, we assert after a considerable amount of experience and personal observation, fully entitled to it.

It must not be forgotten in arriving at any estimate of a comparative nature that his chief work is less to control traffic (which is so important an item of duty with his counterpart in London) or give information, than to watch vigilantly the members of the criminal class who literally swarm in Brussels, as we have already indicated, are of a far more dangerous type than are those in London. He is, however, always ready to afford strangers information so far as his ability allows; but his miscellaneous knowledge of streets, public buildings, cab fares, and other general matters cannot usually, we think, be compared with that of the average London policeman or Parisian gendarme.

Another official with whom almost everyone who visits Belgium comes more or less in contact is the postman. We are bound to confess that when wandering in the more out-of-the-way districts of Belgium we have not found the postal arrangements, at all events regarding *poste restante* letters, invariably satisfactory. Too often, indeed, there seems to be an indifference on the part of the postal officials to the prompt and safe delivery of communications and parcels lying "to be called for." But regarding the postman there is little but praise to be given. He seems possessed of but one idea, his work, which is the safe carriage and accurate delivery of the letters and packets entrusted to his care. For him it has been said, and we think justly, the most important thing upon these are not the addresses, but the names of the people for whom they are intended; and the postman will take an infinitude of trouble to see that the right person ultimately receives the missive or parcel. As is the case with his English and French prototypes, the Brussels postman is generally possessed of an astounding memory; and the mere mention of a name, when any question as to identity or the actual person for whom a letter or other communication is intended, at the sorting tables of the Bureau Central des Postes,



which stands in the sunny open Place de la Monnaie, is generally sufficient to ensure some postman or other giving the necessary information. He is usually an optimist, or at all events looks as though he were, for he has a pleasant smile for everyone ; we have known him beam after climbing with a registered letter (*lettre chargée*) up five flights of stairs in one of the new blocks of flats which of recent times have been erected where once stood quaint, old, and interesting houses in the neighbourhood of the Porte de Namur. Few, we fancy, really grudge him the little tip for which he looks when delivering so important a communication as a registered letter, which to him at least appears to exude a promise of wealth or at least a present of value for the fortunate recipient.

One of the customs which places an immense burden upon the postmen of Brussels and the staff of the Bureau des Postes is that of sending to all one's friends a visiting card on New Year's Day. A recent estimate states that nearly three millions and a half extra letters are in consequence of this practice posted and delivered in the capital alone. And few—save those posted without addresses, or refused by careful addressees because the senders have omitted to stamp them—statistics show, fail to reach their proper destination promptly.

The organization of the Posts and Telegraphs in Brussels strikes the stranger as admirable. Not only are there the usual facilities of street boxes at prominent points, but in the electric cars, which often are used to transport the postman from the Bureau Central to outlying districts, are letter-boxes into which one may place an express letter for a fee of twenty-five centimes for delivery, not only in the city and environs, but in any part of Belgium. The uniform charge of twenty-five centimes for whatever place the letter may be intended within the Kingdom of Belgium has doubtless done much to foster the custom of dispatching communications of any importance or urgency by this means. These boxes are cleared and the contents examined and sorted at the principal *points d'arrêt* along the tram routes, and the contents promptly distributed and dispatched.

There is one thing which all foreign residents and tourists should for their own comfort and reputation for generosity



learn as speedily as possible. Most officials connected with the railways, or tramways, particularly the guards, collectors, and issuers of tickets, known as *receveurs*, look for little tips for services rendered. It is a national custom, and, however much the parsimonious foreigner may object to it from either motives of economy or from principle, it is wise to fall in with the almost universal practice. In Brussels, at all events, we have noticed that, except with very poor people using the trams or few remaining horse omnibuses, it is comparatively seldom the "fare" will take from the collector the five-centime piece (halfpenny) change which is often due on a tram fare.

As a rule the *receveur* or collector is a pleasant-mannered official with perhaps a slight tendency to correct the alien in his or her pronunciation of streets and places at which he or she wishes to alight.

The American girl tourist (and the English, too) provide many occasions for these free lessons in French pronunciation. And sometimes they afford amusement to the occupants of the car. An American girl a short time ago, in company with her mother, wishing to proceed from the Bourse to the Rue de Pepin near the Porte de Namur, demanded of the *receveur*, "Do pour la Porte de Namoor."

"Bien, Mademoiselle, deux Porte de Namur," was the reply. "Nong," exclaimed the young lady, "Porte de Namoor, Porte de Namoor."

"Mais oui, Mademoiselle," replied the man, smiling. "Je vous comprend, parfaitement," at which several of the occupants of the car smiled, "deux places Porte de Namur."

"Nong, nong, vous n'avey pas raisen," was the angry reply. Then the young lady, turning to her mother, said, "Mommer, I guess this man must be a Walloon. He doesn't catch on to my French."

Whether he understood the girl's "English" we cannot say, but not a smile other than of benevolence irradiated his countenance as he handed the speaker two strip tickets and change. But others in the car smiled broadly enough at the linguistic duel which had taken place. "Mommer" looked vexed, and glanced contemptuously at the *receveur*.

The *cochers* of Belgian cities, and Brussels in particular, strike us as being neither much better nor much worse than their brother cabbies in other lands. They are not less ex-

tortionate, so far at least as foreigners are concerned, though on the whole less abusive, than the cabbies of London and English seaside watering-places. They are, perhaps, less good-mannered than those of Vienna. It is not easy for the *cocher*, of whatever nationality, eager to make hay whilst the sun shines, when asked what his charge is, to resist the temptation to double his proper fare. And over and over again when a gendarme has been summoned, or has been attracted by a dispute, the defence is, "Madame or Monsieur (as the case may be) asked me what I wanted !" A disingenuous way of stating the case which does not, of course, impose upon the official. Cab fares are elastic things, and one should avoid consulting the hotel porter upon the subject. He, worthy man, is torn by two distinct and conflicting emotions. The one a desire not to offend the cabman by a too strict adherence to the "tariff," and thus perhaps lead to his not recommending the hotel ; the other to stand well with the just arrived guest, and to prove to him that he, the porter, is a smart fellow who will suffer no client to be cheated, and knows what he is up to.

Some amusing contretemps often occur with foreigners who attempt to give directions to the cabmen in their own tongue. One fine hot day in July in Antwerp a somewhat pompous fellow-countryman of our own, who apparently rather prided himself upon his knowledge of French, desiring to drive from the Place Verte to the Gare Centrale, calmly told the smiling *cocher* he had hailed, "Je veux aller à la Gare Centrale, Chemin d'Enfer." Adding, "Dépêchez-vous." The man, smiling broadly, but catching his meaning, whipped up his horse and drove off. In due time they arrived at the Gare Centrale. The "fare" alighted, handed the perspiring *cocher* (who had driven at an unusual rate, and was now mopping his round tanned face with a red handkerchief of large dimensions) the legal fare or less. The *cocher* remonstrated, and extracted a further sum of twenty-five centimes, the Englishman protesting volubly as he hastened off to catch the train for Brussels. Just as he was about to vanish in the stone doorway the *cocher* called out after him in French, "You asked me to go to the railway to Hell. I only wish I could drive you there !" A parting shot the true inwardness of which we fear escaped the notice of the vanishing tourist.



Unlike those of our own land, the railway officials in Belgium are servants and officers of the State, and are therefore accustomed to a certain amount of deference and consideration which is seldom paid to their British prototypes. It is the ignorance of this fact that causes much of the friction which so frequently occurs at railway stations, not only in Belgium but on the Continent generally, between the officials, and perturbed and ignorant travellers.

The *chef de la gare*, resplendent in a uniform, in which red plays a prominent part and glittering with gold lace, is not there for the purpose of informing excited or other tourists what time their train starts, or from what platform. He is there merely to control the traffic and look imposing. He is apt to resent the assumption that he is a human time-table, and that it is his duty to give travellers information on all sorts of subjects connected more or less with the railway system, to find lost luggage, or settle a dispute with the *commissionnaire*, or porter. And yet we have seen him appealed to on all these and many other points without any preliminary apology for so doing on the part of the anxious inquirers. Usually he has at command a withering kind of look which will check all save the most obtuse or hardened seeker after information. But if approached with politeness, and with a deference to his position as *chef de la gare*, it is seldom the inquirer will meet with a rebuff. The porters—as we understand them—employed by the railways are comparatively few. They have no duties to perform for the travelling public other than seeing that the luggage is placed in the van, and taken out at its destination. They are not there for the purpose of transporting it along the platform from or to the buses or cabs. This may or may not be an advantage. Most English tourists, accustomed to the services of the railway porters, are, we fancy, inclined to think the latter. The true porters, who are at railway stations for the assistance of travellers with luggage, are a respectable band of men, generally in blue linen trousers and garments like a countryman's smock, and wearing a metal disc or badge, either on their arms or in their peaked caps. They are anxious and even eager to assist by carrying luggage and engaging cabs. They have, however, no authority over the baggage or in the station, and cannot take it from the vans or claim it before it has been identified by the railway porters.

Their charges are somewhat high, compared with the usual tip of twopence or threepence expected by their prototypes at home. But to employ them is usually a politic act. Time is undoubtedly often saved, and officials seem to be more easily placated as regards early admission to the departure platform when a *commissionnaire* is seeing to one's luggage.

We remember an American lady who, although she arrived rather late at a certain station, knowing doubtless that a *commissionnaire* would probably charge half a franc to carry her small valise and a hand-bag, made up her mind to save the tip by transporting these things herself. As she expressed it (when a *commissionnaire* perhaps rather urgently pressed his services upon her) she was going "to shift the things herself." She did so. There was some little bother at the ticket barrier, and the parsimonious lady lost the Ostend-Dover express in consequence. She saved her 50 centimes, but incurred a cab fare and hotel bill probably amounting to ten or twelve francs. She was loud in her denunciations of the "porters"—i.e., railway officials—who (as she put it) "stood around like gaping idiots, and allowed me to lose my train." But the latter, some of whom understood her remarks, smiled blandly with a secret and unholy satisfaction at her fate. That was all.

Before we leave a consideration of the more or less official classes who bulk largely in the eyes of alien travellers, a word or two concerning military officers; who, after considerable experience of them, one is bound to say are far pleasanter and more sociable than their brothers in Germany. The Belgian officer, the policeman, and the common soldiers, one would judge from the comic (?) papers of their own land and of neighbouring countries, occupy the unenviable position of butts for cheap wit, that in former times was devoted in our own land to mothers-in-law, temperance folk, and Jews. As a general rule the officer is a soldier and a gentleman. He is interested and well-versed in his profession, and there is yet an absence of "side" in dealing with civilians which is pleasant after, say, one's experiences in Berlin, Moscow, and elsewhere on the Continent. The absence of side and *hauteur* may possibly be in a measure accounted for by the fact that a very large number of the officers of all save such crack regiments as the Guides, Lancers, and Grenadiers, have themselves come



from the people. Those of noble birth wishing to serve in the army chiefly enter the regiments we have specified, and the Carabiniers. The Guides are the "crack" one of the lot. Not a few of the officers of other regiments have risen from the position of *sous officiers*. The pay in the Belgian army is not sufficient to attract men of position *per se*, and the chances of glory or promotion are not great, so one has to fall back upon the supposition that it is chiefly patriotism which causes men to remain in the army after their term of compulsory service.

It is admitted by those who know him that the Belgian officer is a pleasant-mannered, genial fellow as a rule, who treats his men as human beings rather than mere machines, and who has a reputation for looking well after their comfort and attending promptly to any grievances. Belgium has enjoyed peace for so long a period that it is difficult for any save experts to pass an opinion as to the value of the very considerable army she maintains in the event of the country being embroiled in a European war. Belgium has been called the "Battlefield of Europe," and it is not beyond the realms of possibility that Germany may some day—though one devoutly hopes the day may be long postponed—make it once again the theatre of a desperate and devastating conflict, as the absorption—peaceable or otherwise—of Belgium and Holland would give the great Germanic Power the sea-board and harbours she requires.

Outside the military and bourgeois classes there stands a large and important one—the official class of the Civil Service, in which one finds, perhaps, more of the old spirit of courtesy than in any other, and certainly the most charming examples of Belgian gentlemen. In no Continental country will the stranger in search of help or information meet with greater consideration. We can well remember our own first introduction to one of the officials connected with the Department of Arts. Nothing could exceed the kindness and urbanity of the grey-haired old gentleman who received us in an office which was the acme of business comfort and repose. Not only did he give us all the information we desired to obtain; but even went further, and kindly pointed out to us the pictures which in his opinion were, to say the least of it, doubtful examples of the masters to whom they were attributed.

"Monsieur," he said, "it is impossible for Quentin Matsys, or Rubens, or Correggio, to name only a few, to have accomplished all the works to which their names have been attached. But, happily, most genuine pictures are known. These" (indicating several in the catalogue he held in his hand), "are—well" (with an expressive shrug of his shoulders), "doubtful. I am at your service should you require any further information. Make use of me to the fullest extent. I shall be flattered." And with that we were bowed out with the same ceremony that one could imagine this distinguished-looking old gentleman bestowing upon a prince of the blood royal.

The officials of the various Government offices are equally courteous. The staff of these is recruited chiefly from candidates of good birth, or from those who are most promising and cultured. Promotion does not (we were told) come merely automatically. Even after gaining a foothold upon the ladder the members of the various departmental office staffs are expected to pass an examination to show their fitness to be moved up. And those who know the inner workings of the departments, such as that attaching to the office of Secretary of State, the Foreign Office, or War Office, to name only three, agree that the *personnel* is usually excellent and efficient.

Before we describe some of the better-known types of the women of Belgium, it is well for us to remember that there are two distinct races, and in a measure these distinctions, to the casual observer, are almost more marked than is the case with the men.

The chief physical differences which strike one as distinguishing the Walloon from the Flemish women are that the former are of stouter build and of greater stature than the latter, who are fairer, and usually possess fresher complexions and colouring. But the Walloon women are not only bigger and taller, but generally present a very marked contrast to the Flemings, by reason of their darker hair and pale, though not often swarthy, complexions. It is true that in Liége and Luxembourg and in some of the other districts one finds fair-haired Walloons, but as a general rule they are dark, whilst the Flemings are the opposite.

The women of the latter race are more actively industrious and energetic. But the former have the advantage in pos-

sessing better heads for business, and are also generally superior as cooks and housekeepers.

The women of both races are fond of bright-coloured clothing, but the Walloons have the credit for possessing better and quieter taste, and of wearing their garments with greater effect and distinction. This love of colour is nowadays not so noticeable, however, in everyday life as it was, say, even twenty years ago, and Belgian women of the lower classes are seldom seen at their smartest save on Sundays or fêtes. Then women who may be known to one as usually quite dowdy and ordinary in attire will blossom forth into bright colours, and will be smartened up to a wonderful extent, but at the same time will be generally dressed in good taste.

After one has lived for any time in Belgium, and has come to know the people as they are, one recognizes that the women of the country are admirable specimens of the two races, and are alike distinguished for their industry, thrift, cleanliness, and capacity for hard work.

Regarding their astonishing industry there can, we think, be no two opinions. Indeed, the first impression given to the foreigner when touring or residing in the country is that the women do the greater part of the work, and that in consequence the men seem to take things very easily. After a residence of some little time this opinion undoubtedly becomes modified by reason of the additional knowledge one obtains regarding the subdivision of labour. But the longer one lives in Belgium, and the greater opportunities one has in coming in close contact with all classes of the community, the more is the opinion that women do their fair share of the work of the nation in every respect confirmed.

In the larger towns quite as much as in the smaller, one finds the women folk at the head of most of the shops, whether they be the general stores of the country villages, or businesses of considerable size and importance. It is only in the large stores of the capital, and of such towns as Antwerp, Liège, Mons, Namur, and Ostend, that men play their usual part in the control. The women are, however, at any rate in country districts, largely helped in business by their children, and possibly, if they have parents living, by them. But it is in Belgium considered somewhat



inappropriate, if not to say undignified, for an able-bodied man to simply mind a shop. In quite a number of cases the husband will seek employment of a more active nature outside the family business, which his wife will successfully conduct.

The milkman is almost unknown in Belgium, and except for a few boys and lads who accompany their mothers or elder sisters, all the sellers and carriers of milk are women, who go round with their little carts and the brightly polished copper or brass milkcans which are so well-known to all tourists.

A word may well be said regarding the excellent management of the Belgian dairy farms, and of the milk-supply. Inspections of the milkcarts and the milk are frequently held in most of the large towns for the purpose of ascertaining whether the many regulations that exist for the proper conduct of the business are being duly carried out. Not only is the milk itself carefully tested, but the cans are examined to see that they are thoroughly clean, and in every respect in a state of good repair. The condition of the dogs and the harness by which they are attached to the carts also comes in for inspection, lest the former should not have been properly fed, and the latter should in any way chafe or gall the animals.

Whatever one may think of the employment of dogs for the purpose of traction of milk and other small carts (and of course many humanitarians are strongly opposed to the custom), there can be no doubt that as a general rule the animals are well and kindly treated, and their comfort is well looked after by the authorities. Of recent years the owners of each cart have been obliged to provide a small piece of carpet or sacking for the dog to lie upon when resting, and also a drinking bowl.

In all towns a considerable number of inspectors are on the look out day by day, and are in the habit of stopping milk-sellers without notice, and testing the milk that is at that moment being sold. In consequence it is not at all a common practice in Belgium to adulterate the latter, either by water or in any other way. Not only is the adulteration punished by a considerable fine, but should the offence be repeated frequently the licence to sell is promptly withdrawn, and this, of course, means the loss of livelihood.



The dogs which are employed, particularly by the milk-sellers, are of a very powerful breed, and generally two are used to the larger types of carts. Dog traction is a very popular one in Belgium, and it is used not alone by the milk-women, but by a large number of laundresses, some of the bakers, and by the street vendors of vegetables, fruit, etc. It is also employed on many farms for the lighter varieties of traction-work.

Those who know Belgium and its people well will admit that one of the distinguishing features of its Government is the disinclination it has to touch "thorny" subjects, or to introduce any legislation which is likely to be of a controversial or an unpopular type. There undoubtedly exists a general feeling that such laws may interfere with the unwritten rights or the customs of the people; and for this reason from time to time many legislative acts which would be for the betterment of the workers, human and animal, have been merely suggested and then abandoned. Certainly until there is a strong agitation in favour of abolishing these *chiens de trait* nothing will be done.

To return, however, to the women of Belgium. It may be claimed for them that they have the virtue of being early risers, and that they are also generally remarkable for their cheerful appearance and their great activity and briskness. Belgium, possibly from being so flat, and thus open to the invigorating winds which sweep southward across the North Sea, possesses a climate which is far less enervating than that of England. It may be for this reason that many of the Belgian housewives and other workers have almost finished the chief part of their day's work by the time that the average English servant or housekeeper has thoroughly started upon hers. Some Belgian friends who were in England a little while ago remarked to the writer upon the difference of the climates. Over here they found as much difficulty in getting up by half-past eight in the morning as they had to rise three hours earlier in Brussels, or in the country districts of their native land.

One of the most noticeable types of women, found more especially in the towns, is the *patronne* of the cafés or restaurants; who may be the proprietress, or the wife, daughter or sister of the proprietor. As in France she sits or stands behind a kind of bar; or in the larger or better-

class cafés sits in a glass-screened bureau from which she can observe the customers who enter and leave, and all that goes on. She is a very busy person indeed, for not only does she issue orders, and with her eagle eye detect any little slackness which may occur amongst the waiters, but the latter bring all the customers' orders to her, and she calls them down speaking-tubes to the kitchen or to the wine cellars. Or, as is the case in some of the very modern and large restaurants, transmits them by telephone.

The cafés are practically deserted until towards midday; but as is the case in France, everything will be ready for business a little before noon, from which time onwards till about the middle of the afternoon the café or restaurant will generally be at its busiest. About three o'clock, however, if one enters one of these resorts, one will find the proprietor and his family, and a certain number of the waiters, sitting down to a comfortable meal at various tables. After an hour spent over lunch, partaken of in a leisurely way, preparations for the evening trade commence, and once more everything is movement and bustle.

By five or six o'clock the *patronne* is back again in her place, and the daughters of the proprietor (if he has any) are also at their various posts prepared to superintend the meal or see to the wants of their customers.

Dinners in the restaurants of most of even the larger Belgian towns are over by eight o'clock, a slightly earlier hour than is the case in Paris. Commencing at about half-past five or six, there is a two hours or two hours and a half rush of business, and then comes the slack time which intervenes between the last dinner and the first supper, after the theatres and places of amusement have closed. Such suppers, however, are not nearly so popular in Brussels and other big towns of Belgium as is the case in Paris and London, and most of the late customers who turn into the cafés at half-past ten to half-past eleven at night, merely come there for a cup of coffee, a bottle of wine, or an ice, or a *café glacé* in the case of the ladies. A considerable number of whom, by the way, nowadays, are addicted to cigarette-smoking.

Towards eleven o'clock and even earlier in Brussels (and the same remark is applicable to most of the large towns) the crowd at the cafés, except in the case of a few special

ones, begins to thin, and the patrons to find their way home to their flats in the region of the Midi, Avenue Louise, Quartier Leopold, or the Porte de Namur; their villas in the Laeken or Molenbeek quarters; or even further afield in the suburbs. But although the great rush of café life is over rather earlier than it would be in Paris, the *patronne* still remains at her post chatting with belated customers, and prepared to look after the wants of any stray visitor who, by reason of a late arrival by train, or want of knowledge of the customs which govern the hours of feeding in Belgium, makes his appearance for supper after the greater number of the customers have departed. If he finds (as he will undoubtedly do) a less varied choice of *plats* at this late hour than he would in one of the Boulevard restaurants of Paris, at any rate, he will be sure of an atmosphere of cordial welcome, and that whatever he is served with will be well cooked and appetizing.

The workgirls of Brussels who are employed in the large dressmakers' and milliners' shops are a type by themselves, just as is the case in Paris. They are equally neat, equally *gai*, equally industrious as their French sisters. And the Brussels *midinettes* who parade the streets in the neighbourhood of the Boulevard Anspach, Place de la Monnaie, Place de Bronkere, and along the broad Boulevard du Midi during the half-hour they have for lunch towards noon give just the same touch of life, vivacity, and cheerfulness to the streets they frequent as do their sisters who pour out from the workrooms of the famous *couturières* of the Rue de la Paix, Rue du Rivoli, and Avenue de l'Opéra in Paris. It is astonishing, too, what a wonderful amount of pleasure these girls are able to extract from what must, after all, be a somewhat monotonous phase of existence.

Living, as Belgians live—that is to say, as a rule considerably more simply and lightly than people of the same class in England—is certainly cheaper than in London. This is largely due to four circumstances. Firstly, the splendid supply of fresh fish which is always available in Brussels, brought from the not too distant sea-board off which there are some of the finest fishing grounds in Europe. Secondly, owing to the abundance of fresh vegetables and fruit grown on the outskirts of Brussels. Thirdly, to the general practice of buying most fresh food stuffs in the open market.



Fourthly, to the economical use of all articles of food by the thrifty housewives and the well-trained domestic servants.

In the months of June and July, to purchase fine black grapes from sixpence to eightpence a pound is no unusual thing, and vegetables—the freshest and best that one could come across—are proportionately cheap. Fish, too, is far cheaper than in London or Paris, if bought at the fish market near the Place St. Catherine, where also every kind can be obtained at a most reasonable rate.

One should not forget the lace-makers who work not only in the large factories of Brussels and other great towns but who, many of them, make the beautiful fabrics, which are world-famous, in their cottages in the country districts on the outskirts of the large manufacturing and commercial cities. Of these we shall have something to say in another chapter, but in passing one may remark upon the skill and wonderful industry of the women and girls employed in the factories of the Capital. Seated for the most part in light and airy *ateliers* on low chairs, with their lace pillows attached to adjustable stands, and with hundreds of little thread-bobbins, which are shot deftly to and fro with bewildering swiftness across the “cushions,” they work from early morning often till late at night, in manufacturing the varieties of fine and exquisite lace which have become famous the world over.

The average wages amount to the not very considerable sum of £1 a week, the work commencing very soon after seven in the morning and continuing until between six and seven at night. Roughly a twelve hours' day, with about an hour and a half taken out of it for meals and rest.

Many writers who have only a slight acquaintance with the inner life of the Belgian people, and of the women and girls in particular, have created an impression in the minds of foreigners that Belgian women are devoted unduly to pleasure and mere amusement. This idea is erroneous, as the people—certainly as regards the women—are distinguished by a natural cheerfulness of disposition, and an aptitude for getting the best out of life. Our own experience of Belgian women of all classes leads us to think that they get comparatively little amusement when their great industry and the amount of hard work they accomplish is taken into consideration. Indeed, a Belgian gentleman of





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some considerable official standing, told us quite recently that among the women of the lower, the middle, and the upper-middle classes, amusement forms a very small portion of their life, and that they are, in fact, supposed to find their chief pleasure in work and their various household duties.

It is only, indeed, on fête days and other recognized holidays that the regular and unvarying toil of the lower-middle classes is abandoned for the time being for the purpose of obtaining a little recreation. Then at the Kermesses, and the fairs which visit the country towns once or twice a year, one certainly finds the people abandoning themselves to the amusement of the moment, and thoroughly enjoying themselves with a whole-hearted gaiety which is very pleasant to witness. Then, too, their best clothing—which at other times is carefully stored up in presses—will be worn with a distinction which is the more remarkable the lower the social scale in which the women happen to be. As we have before said, the Walloon women are distinguished as the better dressers, and although their menfolk are content with the peasant or bourgeois types of clothing (which are singularly undistinguished and very frequently ill-fitting), their womenfolk, on the other hand, will often be wearing such well-cut clothes, and these with such distinction as would not disgrace a *Parisienn*e.

The absence of regular theatres in even many of the larger towns is a great indication of the lack of a love of pleasure which distinguishes most of the inhabitants of the provincial towns. During recent journeyings almost throughout the length and breadth of Belgium we were surprised to find in large towns of thirty and forty thousand inhabitants that the only forms of amusement discoverable of an evening were small orchestras in the cafés, and third-rate music-halls, chiefly patronized by soldiers and the lower middle-class, in garrison towns such as Mons. Cinematograph performances seemed everywhere in both the greater and the smaller towns to be the most popular form of dissipation in which the inhabitants indulged.

In most of even the large provincial cities, people go to bed at what would be an unconscionably early hour in an English town of a similar size. There is little visiting between neighbours of an evening, most of it being done in the day-

time, on Sundays or fêtes. And although in the larger towns many of the middle-class men belong to "clubs," which meet at some central café for the purpose of gossip, dominoes, billiards, or cards, generally the wives and daughters remain at home quietly sewing.

As a matter of fact, the Belgians are a distinctly domestic and home-keeping race, and it may not be known to all that the saying "East, West, Home's best" is not, as so many people suppose, of American or English origin, but of Flemish.

One very remarkable feature distinguishing Belgian women as a race from others is that this love and adaptability for domesticity characterizes not only the lower class and lower-middle class but the upper-middle class women. The "society" woman who is respectable and the women whose husbands have by business ability and industry made large fortunes, and who may be described as rich men, lead very much the same type of life—dull, many people may think it—as is led by their humbler sisters. Of course, greater wealth enables them to dress better, and when living in such towns as Brussels, Antwerp, or Liège to visit places of amusement more frequently, and to take a longer summer holiday either at *les bains de mer* or in neighbouring countries—France, Switzerland, or Germany; but the life they lead is very much the same as that of their humbler sisters.

Society in Brussels is of a much more quiet and unostentatious character than that of London, Paris, or Berlin. There is an absence of the rush and turmoil; the multifarious engagements, and feverish pursuit of pleasure which distinguishes what is known as "high life" in the capitals we have named.

Of course, Belgian "society" women pay calls, go to "five o'clocks," and take their daily drives in the parks, or in the country surrounding their estates; attend flower-shows, bazaars, race-meetings, military sports, and similar gatherings, as do women of a like position all the world over. But whether she be high or low, the one absorbing interest of the Belgian woman's life is her household and its various developments and affairs.

English, French, and Americans, accustomed to "society" life in London, Paris, or New York, almost invariably find



that of Brussels dull and rather void of interest except just at the very height of the season.

Although perhaps costly and extravagant dress is not so much prevalent among the women of the better class in the Belgian capital as it is with their sisters in Paris and London, yet the Brussels *modistes* enjoy a high reputation for the beauty of their "creations" just as they do for style and fit.

"Brussels," we were told by one of the greatest *couturières* of the Belgian capital, "draws most of its inspiration from Paris, and is generally some little time ahead as regards fashion when compared with London and Berlin."

In one department of women's dress, at any rate, Brussels can well hold her own, even with Paris, and that is in *lingerie*, which is doubtless owing to the fact that beautiful lace is manufactured so largely in Belgium and is, comparatively speaking, so reasonable in price. As a general rule, too, we were told (except, perhaps, to tourists and members of the English colony inexperienced in shopping and bargaining) the cost of dress as a whole is in Brussels considerably lower than it is in Paris, whilst the charges made by the dressmakers are also very moderate, compared with those of similar artistes in Paris and in London.

Unlike her French and English sisters of the middle class, the Belgian woman will prefer to have one or two really good costumes, to a number which are tawdry and showy rather than really serviceable and smart. Her ordinary dress is always distinguished rather for simplicity and usefulness and an element of style than for novelty and elaboration. Her two or three good dresses will be worn when they can be shown to advantage—that is to say, when shopping, making calls, visiting places of amusement, and on Sundays—and will be very carefully preserved when not in wear, so that generally they remain fresh and smart until a change of fashion has made a change of garment desirable.

The dress allowance of a middle-class tradesman's wife will amount to from £20 to £25 a year, and that of a professional man perhaps to £10 or £20 more. And for this sum they will respectively make a far better appearance than a *Parisienn*e or a Londoner with half as much again to expend on her clothes. In many cases, too, the greater portion of

the clothing bill of her children (if she has any) will have to be met out of her own dress allowance.

The position and life of the women of Belgium strike the observer as being on the whole singularly happy, because of the heartwhole interest which they one and all appear to throw into their domestic and other duties and affairs. Certainly, whether they be the manageresses of shops, the proprietresses of restaurants and hotels, the workgirls in dressmakers' and milliners' establishments, in lace factories or glove factories, the milk-women, or those who are best described as farm labourers, the little shopkeepers of the small provincial towns, or the pit-girls of the "Borinage," they all appear to esteem labour as part of their natural existence, and to work with an energy and whole-heartedness that might well be copied by the women of some other countries.

The domestic servants, who form a considerable class of themselves in Belgium, are, we have been told by those who employ them, generally admirable. A good cook is the rule rather than the exception, and if the domestic is merely a maid-of-all-work she may be depended upon to work industriously from five or six in the morning till eight or nine at night for quite moderate wages, requiring not her evening a week and half Sunday out, but contented if she has one evening every fortnight or three weeks. On these occasions she enjoys herself, either by walking out with her young man, or attending some dance or other form of simple amusement at one of the numerous club-rooms which exist in most of the large, and in many of the small, provincial towns.

Belgium, although noted for its manufacturing industries, and with a population almost twice the density of that of the United Kingdom, as yet, in spite of the decided movement of the population to the towns—which is, of course, one of the outstanding economic features of all modern civilization—remains largely a rural community.

In 1900 the percentage of the country population was 56·5 as against 26·7 in the United Kingdom. Thus it will be seen the country is still largely an agricultural community, and, indeed, nearly three-quarters of a million of her people are agriculturists. What is still more striking, perhaps, is that 65 per cent. of them consists of farmers and members of their families who work with them—only 35 per cent. being



employed as labourers. In our own land these figures are practically reversed.

Belgium is a land of small owners, and is much divided up—one in ten of the population owning at least a plot—and there are practically no large landed proprietors such as are known in the United Kingdom. No less than 47 per cent. of the soil is owned or held by those whose holdings do not exceed a hundred acres.

It will therefore be gathered that the peasant proprietors and their families play a not unimportant part in the prosperity of the country at large. They, at all events, succeed in wresting, by the unceasing family labour of all sexes and ages, a yield from the land largely in excess of what is obtained in England. And for agricultural land in Belgium the price is nearly double as regards purchase or renting what it is with us.

It would appear to the student that the wider ownership of land, and the consequently larger number of economical independent units in the population, has more than a little to do with the fact that the proportion of Belgian unemployed is considerably below what it is in Great Britain.

A recent and a careful writer upon the subject\* says of the agricultural labourer: "While it lasts the lot of a Belgian labourer is not an enviable one." But it should be explained that the term "while it lasts" has reference to the fact that a Belgian agricultural labourer has a far better chance of becoming an independent small holder than he would have in England. But, on the other hand, the same writer thinks that it would be an exaggeration to refer in general terms to the life of a small holder as being one of incessant toil and unending slavery; and taking this class as a whole the writer considers that their lot is decidedly superior to that of their English prototypes.

No doubt the life of the average rural worker in Belgium is rendered harder from the fact that the wages are only about at the level which was attained here seventy years ago. And as Belgium has not yet adopted any system of compulsory education it is not much to be wondered at that the Belgians of the lower classes have not yet comprehended the virtues and power of combination; and that labour laws

\* "Land and Labour: Lessons from Belgium," by B. Seebohm Rowntree.



controlling all industries are sadly at fault, with the possible exception of those governing the work in Belgian mines ; and that the drink curse is even a greater evil than it is in the United Kingdom.

For our own part, and from what we have seen of the Belgian agriculturists, we are not inclined to take quite so gloomy a view as the writer we have quoted regarding their possible outlook upon life. As a general rule, they have struck us as being singularly contented with their lot, which, if a hard one from a manual point of view, is not without its advantages in that so many of them are working for themselves and reaping the greater part of the benefit that arises from their toil. In one respect all workers in Belgium have an immense advantage over their counterparts in England because of the splendid system of national transport which exists in their country, enabling the workers to live in healthy surroundings by reason of the very low railway fares which prevail ; and the national afforestation which is always being carried out on a large scale proves a very valuable factor in employment.

To see virtue in the customs or the people of other lands is considered by some people to exhibit an unpatriotic spirit. But it is only those observers who look fairly and squarely at the virtues and vices which distinguish the people of other nations who can hope to arrive at a just or unbiased and critical estimate of the merits or demerits of a foreign land or people.

Belgium remains in one's memory as a highly industrious as well as a great industrial nation, and its inhabitants as a people, who not only improve greatly upon acquaintance, but whose leading characteristics are such as go to prove them a solid, enterprising, and home-loving race.



GOING HOME FROM MARKET





### CHAPTER III

#### SOME SEASIDE TOWNS AND LIFE ON THE "PLAGES"

AS the Dover-Ostend mail-boat draws in towards the land on its way across the North Sea, long before the harbour mouth at Ostend, with its narrow waterway and two long *estacades* or piers known as the Estacade de l'Est and Estacade de l'Ouest, is distinguishable the huge hotels on the *digue* which appear grey or gleaming white as the sun is obscure or shining become visible, like an irregular row of teeth of some huge sea monster cast upon the low-lying shore.

This brilliant seaside town—wicked with the concentrated wickedness of a truly cosmopolitan holiday resort, to which the sharpers and *demi-mondaines* of many lands flock during the season as though scenting their victims from afar; interesting to the student of manners, morals, and twentieth-century progress; and fascinating to the "unco guid," who during the months of July and August flock across the North Sea, drawn hither by the curiosity that the "proper" always have for the underlying improper—is like none other. Money seems to exude in the hotels, and it certainly flows through the fingers of men, and literally melts in the hands of the hordes of charming and beautiful women who, drawn from the four quarters of Europe, frequent it in the height of the season.

The summer life at Ostend is the life of fashionable, idle, and in a measure strenuous, Europe crushed into an area of a few hundred metres deep and three or four kilometres long. Here in Ostend vice and virtue are in a sense segregated, though such is not the case in most of the great palaces of hotels which rear proud façades along the marvellous *digue*, and gaze out with many window-eyes

over the changeful expanse of the open sea. Everyone has heard of the price one has to pay in these huge caravan-serais of luxury. Stories are apt to be exaggerated, but still during the short season of *les bains de mer* one need have a deep purse and a light heart to "put up" at some of them we mention.

At the back of the town, in the by-streets near the Parc Leopold, and in the quarter set in from the sea near the Hippodrome, are the "family" hotels, and "pensions," where good cooking and a reasonable amount of comfort costs little more than at Hastings, Brighton, or Bournemouth during the summer months when the town-weary flock to the borders of the sparkling sea.

"But to enjoy Ostend," as a vivacious French friend explained, "one must have *la galette* (cash), *toujours la galette*, and plenty of it." One cannot obtain much amusement, save that of watching the sea and the multitudinous types along the *digue* and on the *plage*, for nothing at Ostend in the height of the season. But the keen observer of men and things will, we think, admit that the experience one gains is worth paying for.

Though the town as it is to-day known to tourists and visitors is of wonderfully modern growth, an outcropping as it were of palaces and spacious villas from the inhospitable sand dunes, Ostend is in reality of ancient standing. In the times of the glorious Charlemagne it was known as a fishing village of some little importance and size. By the thirteenth century it had grown to be a strong fortress guarding the coast and looking out across the wide expanse of waters from which the menace of the Northmen might come. Like most similar places it suffered from attacks, sieges, plagues, famines, and the dangers and vicissitudes of the stirring times of the Middle Ages. The famous Countess Margaret of Flanders raised it to the dignity of a township in the year 1267, and granted it valuable privileges which fostered both its growth and importance.

Among the sieges to which the Ostend of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was subjected, was the ever memorable one—one of the long sieges of history—lasting three years. The States-General in their struggle were assisted by France and England, and Ostend, attacked by the forces under the Spanish General Ambrogio Spinola,

offered a stout resistance, and only yielded—as did not a few other strongholds in those days—when famine inside assisted the besiegers without. During the war arising out of the Pragmatic Sanction published by Charles VI., when he settled his dominions upon his daughter Maria Theresa, in which almost all the chief European nations including Great Britain, France, Prussia, Bavaria, and Saxony were involved, Ostend was captured by the French forces in the year of Culloden, 1745. They held it for a period of three years, but were compelled to restore it to Austria, part of whose empire West Flanders was, at the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle on April 30, 1748. The town was destined, however, to once more fall into the hands of the French, who captured the fortress during the wars of the Revolution, when vast armies of the Republic were concentrated upon the West Flanders frontier to repel the forces which had been raised by other monarchies in aid of the Royalists of France. Ostend remained a French possession until the fall of Napoleon at Waterloo, when it and Flanders were incorporated in the kingdom of the Netherlands. It so remained until the year 1830, when there came the revolt of the Flemings and Walloons and the kingdom of Belgium was established, of which Ostend and West Flanders formed a part.

The old order, however, as regards Ostend has passed almost completely away, giving place to the newest of the new. The castle has disappeared, the “ramparts” have (what remains of them) been converted into promenades, and the sea-front has been entirely transformed. In the place of the fisher-town has arisen one of the most fashionable and modern Continental watering-places. A town of hotels, inns, boarding-houses, villas and shops, many of the first named vieing with those of the Riviera in magnificence, size and costliness. Through the port flows during the year, and more especially, of course, during the summer months, a great and ever-increasing stream of travellers and holiday makers bound for Germany, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, and other countries further East. It is to this ever-increasing traffic that the place in a large measure owes its foundation and its vogue. Its normal population of some 40,000 is more than doubled during the summer months, when a truly cosmopolitan crowd flocks to it from the four



corners of Europe; and its native inhabitants—the fisher-folk of yester year—now comparatively few in number, become almost obliterated and little more than a picturesque element in the life of the town.

Ostend, however, just out of and just in the season, is a marvellously different place. At the commencement of July, this exotic city by the Northern sea is about to put on its mantle of transient gaiety. The great white hotels along the wide and the as yet almost unpeopled *digue* are cleaned and repainted, and furbished up ready for the coming of the cosmopolitan crowd which two or three weeks later will pack the Splendide, Ocean, and Royal Palace, and other huge caravanserais to repletion, throng the sea-front, invade the Kursaal, and appear at night in the shop-window-like restaurants which form the ground floors of most of the great hotels.

As August approaches, it is towards Ostend that the motor cars of Grand Dukes (whose visits, by the way, seem inseparable from temporary alliances and scandals) and plutocrats will be speeding from the Russian frontier and European capitals; while *trains de luxe* bring lesser folk to their annual “rest” at *les bains de mer*. The costly round of daily pleasure—which can be made to deplete the coffers of a Cræsus—is about to commence. In no similar resort in the world, possibly, is a day of pleasure so elaborately planned by its votaries as at Ostend. There is the etiquette of each hour, and each amusement has its proper time. Bathing, horse-racing, “le lawn tennis,” and croquet at the Club or on the *plage*, golf, gambling in the Club Privé at the Kursaal, and at other resorts; dancing, music, balls, epicurean feeding in private or in public—in the softly lighted “cabinets particuliers” of Maxim’s and other restaurants, or the great glass windows of the huge hotels—all have their proper hours. And sleep? Well, one gets it as one may. Only the professional beauties probably sleep by rule at Ostend, in the season.

And yet one remembers that it was to the Ostend of his day—already a watering-place of some little note, but how different!—that Byron came to commence his many wanderings on the Continent after his disgrace in the April after Waterloo. Byron, after unburdening himself, in the columns of a newspaper called the *Champion* of two widely differing

poems—one tender and the other acridly bitter, the one addressed to his sister and the other to Mrs. Clermont—"set sail from the port of Dover on April 16, 1816, and in due time came at length"—now it is a matter of three and a half hours—"to Ostend by sea." He had fled from London in his famous coach, which had, we are told, cost £500 to build, from the bailiffs and duns who had added to his life's misery for a year and more past in his house in Piccadilly. When he came to Dover it was to find the wind so adverse that his setting sail was delayed.

One can imagine how Byron fumed and fretted. For had not news reached him that the bailiffs were already in possession of his London mansion, and might even pursue him? From Lord Broughton's "Recollections of a Long Life" we learn how, on the Monday following his arrival at Dover, Byron "got on board [the mail packet] a little after nine. The bustle kept Byron in spirits, but he looked affected when the packet glided off. I ran to the end of the pier, and as the vessel tossed by us through a rough sea and contrary wind, I saw him again. The dear fellow pulled off his cap and waved it to me." The mail packet arrived at Ostend at midnight on April 27 with Byron on board. He seems from all that has come down to us—and the knowledge is scanty—to have suffered from overmastering depression. But the active, luminous mind of the poet was already at work turning his experiences into verse pictures for inclusion in the third canto of wonderful "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage." Surely in the following stanza one catches a distant echo of the turmoil of sea through which he had recently passed, of the riven sky and scurrying scud, of the salt air and organ note of the North Sea wind:

"Once more upon the waters! yet once more!  
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed  
That knows his rider. Welcome to their roar!  
Swift be their guidance, wheresoe'er it lead!  
Though the strained mast should quiver as a reed,  
And the rent canvas fluttering strew the gale,  
Still must I on; for I am as a weed,  
Flung from the rock on Ocean's foam to sail,  
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail."\*

The voyager, however, did not pause long at the small and then dirty seaport which was, nevertheless, one of the

\* "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," Canto III., Stanza 2.

“gates of Europe.” His coach departed through the old Porte on its way to Bruges. None seem to know where the poet stayed the night, if he paused in his journey beyond a few hours which linked midnight with dawn. But Ostend will, nevertheless, always be connected with Byron’s flight from shame and disaster.

But the English literary annals of the town do not end with Byron’s brief sojourn. In the Rue Longue, No. 29, at the back of the *digue*, and separated from it only by the houses and the curving Boulevard van Iseghem, stands a house which can scarcely fail to be of some interest to English people and Americans who come to Ostend, even though they be not literary. Here that great laughter-maker, Tom Hood, resided for his health during the years 1837 to 1840, carrying on his literary work (chiefly, we are told, that of his *Comic Annual* and *Hood’s Own*) with “uncommon difficulty.” Hood, as one gathers from his biography by Jerrold, liked the place, and would even have been willing, had ways and means been forthcoming, to settle there at least for a time. He from Ostend indited his sarcastic “Ode to Rae Wilson, Esq.,” who had, unfortunately for himself, seen fit publicly to reprove the poet for “undue levity in touching upon religious topics.” This charge nettled Hood, who was a really religious man, and whose satire was directed, not at religion, but against shams and cant; and when the attack was renewed he produced the famous and stinging “Ode,” in which he wrote:

“I do not hash the Gospel in my books,  
And thus upon the public mind intrude it,  
As if I thought, like Otaheitan cooks,  
No food was fit to eat till I had chewed it.  
On Bible stilts I don’t affect to stalk;  
Nor lard with Scripture my familiar talk.”

The effect upon the person to whom the “Ode” was dedicated is said to have been crushing.

There was no *digue* like that of the present day when Hood sought to walk along the coast and sniff the keen, fresh North Sea air, which blows uncontaminated by the smoke of cities or the lungs of men. His path lay amid the sand-dunes, past fishing hovels, whether he went eastward or westward, although five years previously, according to Baedeker and other authorities, Ostend had commenced its



development as a fashionable seaside watering-place. The narrow streets, too, which Hood traversed, have many of them been swept away, and the memory of the man is dim with the Ostenders of the twentieth century.

Many writers have crossed to Ostend and lingered there for a variable time, but none have left their mark upon the place, though the modern town with its kaleidoscopic life has been portrayed more or less vividly in their books.

Certainly Ostend has nowadays become one of the most interesting and amusing of Continental holiday resorts, as well as a most bracing and invigorating one. A lady whose travels, we presume, had not been very extensive, recently wrote to a London daily newspaper after a trip to Ostend, and amongst other things she said: "A day at Ostend is a liberal education." Perhaps it is. Let us try and describe one such day that we spent not so very long ago in the height of the season.

Holiday-makers of the less exotic type, many of them, are early astir. It arouses no comment in the mind of the *commissionnaire* at an hotel to be told to wake English or French visitors at six or half-past, even though they may not have come in from Maxim's, the Casino, Club Privé, the Scala Music Hall, or the famous Grand Café de la Terrasse, which somewhat grandiloquently and inaccurately announces itself on its menu card as "le plus vaste Music Hall du Littoral," till an hour well past midnight. At the early hour we have mentioned of an August morning the *digue* will be almost deserted; here and there one finds a solitary figure gazing out over the grey sea, which is veiled by a slight pearly haze, and the old-ivory-tinted strand, which at low tide is one wide expanse, corrugated here and there by the lazily receding tide. Along the *digue* may be also seen couples or small groups of early risers bound for the *plage*, with more or less efficient shrimping-nets over their shoulders in imitation of the real *pêcheurs* and *pêcheuses* who will have been out since grey dawn broke in the east.

"On to the *plage* and shoes off" is the word. Along the edge of the lazily retreating or incoming tide one meets isolated paddlers or family parties. Women and girls who later in the day will display the elaborate and beautiful toilettes of Paris, Brussels, and Viennese *couturières* upon the *digue*, the race-course, or in the wide grounds of the Royal

Palace Hotel, are now in bathing costumes, or with discarded or tucked-up petticoats, boldly displaying *lingerie* and shapely limbs flecked with glistening drops of salt water. For in the early hours of the day, when Ostend itself is mostly still sleeping after the fatigues of the previous night, it is the unconventional note which marks what life there is upon the silvery *sable* and in the shallows where prawns and shrimps dart swiftly. Dainty indeed are these paddling *pêcheuses*, with the "trail of the amateur" in their delicate laces and elaborate *lingerie* as much as in their often ridiculously inadequate toy shrimping-nets and creels. But they get plenty of fun out of these early morning expeditions, and a bracing-up in the cool air to fit them for the toil of pleasure of the just-broken day.

Ten o'clock on a morning of sunshine, with a deep blue vault of sky above, and stately sailing argosies of fleecy white clouds, and the sea ultramarine or the colour of absinthe, as it may be, of a depth almost unfathomable, or shallow with the white sand shining up through it. The yellow *plage* in front of the great hotels upon the now-thronged *digue* is already thick with crowds of eager bathers. There is a long queue at the châlet-like bureaux set up against the sea-wall, where tickets for the *cabines* are to be obtained and costumes and towels procured. Even around the further châlet, where the provident deposit watches, rings, money, and any other valuables, there is quite a small crowd. There is no disorder, for people at Ostend, eager though they may be to get in the water, seem to realize that they have the morning before them, and good-nature matches the smiling sky above.

Already many of the hundreds of machines, which when not in use are drawn up in serried rows along the *plage*, are lumbering their way down to the water's edge. As they sway across the sand into the sea, where their huge black wheels churn up the lapping tide, they form delicate notes of colour; pink, saffron, French grey-blue, rose, orange, red, pale blue, dark blue applied to their square-looking wooden bodies in bars or stripes of varying widths. The carved ridges and finials upon the famous *cabines de luxe* cutting the horizon line sharply. A very little while later and the sea is literally alive with bathers, and the morning scurry for machines and reversions of machines commences. Late



BEACH AND CASINO, OSTEND





comers are now so eager to secure *cabines* that they wade into the water, and mount upon the tail-boards or steps of in-going vehicles to secure "next turn."

Alas! sometimes the gay paddlers (they are, after all, little more) of Ostend will remain in a couple of hours!

Dainty Parisiennes, stolid Berlinese, smart Bruxelloises gather up their dainty skirts boldly, and follow their men-folk into the sea in search of a soon-to-be-vacated machine.

The wagging of the "cow's tail," intimating that the occupant of a machine wishes to return to shore, is the signal for a rush in which skirts retreat yet further waistward, and amid laughter and much splashing the incoming machine is seized upon. Then ensues a wordy warfare as to the priority of arrival and claim. A battle of words which sounds infinitely less good-tempered and much worse than it really is. Some one wins the day, smiles benignly at the defeated rivals, and all is well.

In the water is now a gay and laughing throng. Cameras are busy. The professional photographer, who during the few short weeks of the season coins money by taking snapshots of the bathers at prices varying from fifty centimes for one proof, a franc for three, and double those amounts, is busy importuning all and sundry. The dainty Parisienne from some well-known music hall or theatre, whose costume is brief, black, and lace-topped; the "society" woman who wears a silken swimming suit of a tightness which outrivals the famous breeches of the French King Louis; the little workgirl, in a smart home-made suit of a Neapolitan fisher-boy type; the fat German *hausfrau*, with her equally stout daughters; the exquisitely dressed *demi-mondaine* who has had her silk or serge costume from Doucet or Worth especially designed by an equally famous fashion artist; and the American or English girl who seeks still to preserve the extreme proprieties by a serviceable costume of black or blue or red serge trimmed severely with white braid; the fat man—whose balloon-like contours cause the irreverent amongst the crowd lining the shore along the water's edge to address the query as to when he is going to ascend; the thin man who is advised by the same irreverent jokers not to cut anyone when he bobs up against them; the wasp-like bather who dons a gorgeous yellow and black striped costume; the dandy who fancies something in green

and yellow; the man who wears a quartered flannel shirt like that of a footballer, and white flannel knickerbockers; the serious swimmer, who at Ostend can scarcely ever hope to be permitted to swim; are one and all importuned to have their photographs taken. Many succumb to the blandishments of the man in white ducks, who trudges about in the water all morning long with the familiar camera on a tripod, surmounted with a black velvet focusing cloth. The results of his labours will be ready for approval the same night or early next morning, and as everyone is in a good-humour in the sea at Ostend they can scarcely fail to please.

The fact that a photo is about to be taken seems to be transmitted by some mysterious system of wireless telegraphy all along the beach, and the crowd of idlers at once concentrates upon the spot. The victims who may be posing astride the wheel or roof of their machine, or more decorously seated upon or leaning against the tail-board or steps, are the cynosure of several hundreds of pairs of eyes. Everyone in the crowd comments good-humouredly upon the costume and figures of the bathers (especially those of the ladies) who are being "taken." The ordeal is, indeed, so severe a one that we have known the victims decamp and rush back into the sea without leaving their names or addresses with the operators.

Then the little crowd straggles away again along the water's edge in search of some other sensation. The daring pranks of some Parisienne or *demi-mondaine*; a boisterous game of hide and seek between the machines; the arrest on suspicion of some possibly entirely innocent foreign bather who has forgotten the number and location of his machine, and who has indiscreetly gone up the steps and peered into some other in the vain hope of identifying his own particular clothing. He is denounced by the occupants of the machine to the gendarmes of the *plage*, and as he can usually speak no language save his own finds himself in a tight corner. All these episodes provide that element of excitement always present, or at least latent, in a Continental crowd.

The approach of the luncheon hour sees a rapid incoming of bathers to the machines now thick upon the edge of the water. Long before this, however, the *élégantes* who



patronize those luxurious bathing machines known as *cabines de luxe*, which, with extra fees to the bathing women, to the *sauvetege* men, and to the men who drive the horse which hauls the *cabine* seaward and then shoreward, cost the user close upon fifteen francs for the morning bathe, have come out of the water to perform their elaborate toilet arts, which frequently made more or less in view of the beach audience are not much less frequently finished upon the steps of the machines themselves.

By a little after mid-day there is a constant and ever increasing stream of people flowing from the beach up on to the *digue*, along it to the restaurants of the town, or into the great hotels which tower many storied and pearly white or grey above the *plage*. The luncheon hour is not usually a long one at Ostend. There is so much to be done afterwards.

During the season few days pass without some racing of one kind or another at the Hippodrome; tennis matches in the grounds of the Royal Palace Hotel or at the Lawn Tennis Club; or a delightful Children's Ball, Bataille des Fleurs, or other social function at the Kursaal. To these everybody who is anybody goes. A French writer has declared that "the Grand Stand at the Hippodrome on a race day is a parterre of multi-tinted delightful human flowers. . . . Amid this throng of exquisitely dressed women, the perfume from whose dresses mingles on the breeze, there runs a *frisson* of excitement as the flag falls and the fleet-footed racers get away. An excitement which grows in intensity as the horses, small and ant-like in the distance, round the corner and come into the straight. A sob goes up as they pass the post, either in a group of shining, fleeting animals or in a procession."

Between the races the stand is almost deserted for the *pesage*, for the shade of the stand, for the café. There is a Babel of languages; but there is an undercurrent of English and American. Pretty and smart girls, who speak through their noses, confess their losses to indulgent "poppers," and serious-looking and severely-gowned Englishwomen compare notes, and discuss the horses and the next race with familiarity and acumen.

When the last race has been run there is the general exodus. Hundreds of the more fashionable go to the

pleasant grounds of the neighbouring hotel for "five o'clock," others to the Club, hundreds take the trams to Middelkerke and back; thousands stroll along the *digue* slowly towards the harbour mouth, and thereby get an appetite for dinner.

A couple of hours later the *mondaines* and *demi-mondaines*, the "society" women of all nations, will have once more changed their dresses, and the smart and elegant toilettes seen on the race-course and at "five o'clock" will have given place to the magnificent evening-dresses, which represent *le dernier cri* in fashionable extravagance.

As the dinner hour approaches, the *digue* becomes thronged with crowds who do not dine, or who have dined early in order that they may come and gaze at the diners in the shop-window-like restaurants of the great hotels. In these one sees gathered, within a foot of the open or closed windows (as the night may warrant), the well-dressed Englishwoman, the smart American, the *chic* Parisienne, and the elegant Viennese, with a sprinkling of women of the theatres and music halls of most European capitals, who in ultra-*décolletée* gowns and large hats sit at the window-tables and laugh at the often caustic comments of the good-natured crowd of onlookers.

Not much before nine these diners take their way along the *digue* to the Kursaal, where one of the finest orchestras in Europe, whose musicians possess portentously expansive shirt-fronts, has been already for an hour or so interpreting the masterpiece of musical composers ranging from Mozart, Beethoven, Gounod, and Wagner to Sullivan, Costa, Waldteufel, Strauss, and Lenar. Others will drop in at the Theatre Royal, or at the Scala Music Hall, where there is usually a smart "revue" with a *risque* "book," or a ballet notable for pretty women and daring costumes.

Towards midnight, after the music-hall and theatre, there will be a flow of people, not yet tired with the amusements of an Ostend day, to the brilliantly lighted and gay Grand Café de la Terrasse. Here, in the season, from seven o'clock onwards, until one almost begins to think of dawn, will be gathered a truly cosmopolitan throng, grouped at scores of small tables for two or four or more persons, listening to an excellent orchestra of scarlet-clad musicians, whose *répertoire* comprises excerpts from all modern operas

and musical plays, classical selections, and original compositions of native and foreign composers. To most visitors to Ostend the gigantic and gorgeously attired frame, and genial and expansive smile of Auguste, the negro major-domo of the café, is, we fancy, well known. He smiles and chats, sells picture-postcards of himself, of Ostend *baigneuses*, of the Kursaal, and jokes freely with all the patrons, contributing not a little to the easy good fellowship which usually prevails. It is impossible to be incensed by Auguste's chaff. One can only be envious at the impression he creates upon susceptible ladies!

Other folk will have made their way for supper, and to see a phase of reckless and extravagant life, to Maxim's, which is but an echo, however, of the famous resorts of the same name in Paris and Vienna. Here one meets some of the habitués of the Paris house, of the Café American, of the Maison Dorée, and Café Anglais. Elegant women, well-groomed men. The one displaying wonderful toilettes from the Maison Doucet, Worth's, Lucille's, and Paquin's upon figures made familiar by picture-postcards, and the latter apparently intent upon spending money and seeing dawn break in lively company.

But by this time most Ostenders have retired to rest. Along the *digue*, watching the moonlight upon the water, or the incoming or outgoing fishing fleet, may be a few sentimental folk. But the bulk of holiday-makers are already in bed; the belated waiters in the big hotels are yawning horribly; the lift-man of the Splendide is even sleepy, and quietude at last falls over the town.

Considering the inrush of population during the season, the fact that ruffians and blacklegs congregate, as they always will where pleasure and money rule, Ostend is wonderfully well-conducted after dark. Few disturbances take place in the streets, and what goes on inside the walls of the tiny "Clubs Privés," many of which are said to exist and flourish amazingly during the months of July and August, and other houses need not trouble us.

The Palais du Roi, during the late King's lifetime, always had an especial interest for Americans, and old ladies who wished to be shocked. Various and lurid were the tales told by communicative hotel porters and old visitors to the innocent stranger of the iniquities which those walls could



reveal if only they had tongues! Every lady ever seen walking in the pleasant grounds, which can be overlooked from the steam-tramcars, was open to suspicion. Half the theatrical stars of Paris have been reputed to be guests at the Palais du Roi at one time or another. Orgies unsurpassed by the ingenious and decadent functions devised by the smart set of New York were said to take place each time the late King was in residence. And almost everyone professed to believe the tales. We remember a dear old lady at *table d'hôte* assuring us that there were "terrible goings on," which only her innate and old-fashioned modesty prevented her describing in detail. But nevertheless King Leopold, whose tall, spare figure and patriarchal white beard were familiar to most tourists during each summer season, and to most of the inhabitants of the town he did much to create and advance to prosperity, was an immensely popular person. It was only the official class, and the old nobility who took his—it must be confessed—numerous peccadilloes very seriously. The average Belgian always seemed, in conversation at least, to esteem the King a rather fine fellow. "A man of *affaires* to his finger-tips," declared a well-known Belgian journalist to us. Adding, with a shrug of the shoulders, "But it is a pity he is not more serious in other matters."

Children, who knew nothing of "the Baroness," of Cleo de Mérode, and their fascinating rivals, or of the Congo, loved the King, for he had a pleasant way of patting curly heads he met on the *digue*, and of greeting all sorts and conditions of men unceremoniously.

But, after all, Ostend does not consist entirely of *digue*, huge hotels, and the brilliant and expensive gaiety of its fashionable visitors. There is much to interest the quieter type of visitor in the life of the older portion of the town, in the back streets behind the colossal hotels.

Indeed, in these by-ways, in the market, and on the quays of the harbour may be found many interesting and picturesque peeps and sights such as artists love. Among others, vistas of shipping, fishing-boats with rust-red sails, and with smoke-blue and tanned nets triced up to dry; quaint little dog-drawn milkcarts with shining brass cans, and the old women who so frequently trudge alongside of them with quaint Flanders caps and wooden sabots; whilst



CANAL LIFE IN BELGIUM





the market-women of the Marche aux Herbes, the fishermen of the quays and Marche aux Poissons near the New Basin, the seamen of the docks, and the country-folk who flock into the town in all the glory of best clothes and spotless caps on Sundays and fêtes, are picturesque and quaint.

The different sieges Ostend has undergone have left it with few old buildings, so that little of interest exists for the antiquarian. The ancient church of St. Peter and St. Paul, which dates from the middle of the eleventh century, standing in the corner of the Place Prince Baudouin, was destroyed by fire fifteen years ago. Only a fragment of the old building remains, a gaunt, spectre-like relic of a bygone age associated with the little fishing hamlet of the past, and seeming to be strangely incongruous with the fashionable and flourishing town of to-day.

The parks of Ostend give a pleasant change from the sun-smitten *plage* and, with their waving trees, brilliant "carpet"-bedding, and sheets of ornamental water, provide object lessons of the triumph of men's horticultural skill and energy over Nature's inhospitable and arid sands.

Along the Belgian littoral, both east and west of Ostend, are scattered several seaside resorts, to which come year by year visitors in increasing numbers. None are so noted as their great sister, and the cost of living and fashionableness decreases the further one gets east or west of Ostend itself.

A delightful place is Blankenberghe, which lies some thirteen miles to the east of Ostend, with a quaint harbour, and a fine *digue*. To reach it, what better way than a walk along the coast, amid the sand-hills in the bracing air which comes off the sea even on a hot day? But for those to whom the enterprise would seem too adventurous there is the tramway, and for more energetic mortals the fine cycling and motor road now connecting the two towns.

Set amid the sand-hills as one spins along, one comes across the outposts of resorts to be, or of those already in the making, in the shape of quaintly designed villas, each with its garden space of yellow sand, in which trees and flowers are being coaxed to grow with all the faith that seems to possess the Belgian gardener and proprietor on this stretch of sandy coast. Bathing, golf, and lawn tennis seem to be the staple amusements when one has referred to

the desperate battle with the sand that amateur and other gardeners seem always to be waging. From balconies and window-sills of these villas flutter not flags of welcome, as the short-sighted stranger might imagine as he glides along in motor, train, or on his bicycle. The red, blue, grey, green, turquoise, white, black and orange banners are but the bathing costumes of the inhabitants hung out to dry! Prosaic explanation of so triumphal a possibility.

There is little of interest on the landward side on the way to Blankenberghe. The soil is arid, and the surface flat, with here and there a stunted tree, a café restaurant, and an isolated villa. As one speeds past Coq sur Mer, and pretty Wendune, which is endeavouring to become a small Ostend, where quite smart toilettes are worn by lady visitors, and men are known to dress for dinner, one is lost in wonder at the faith and enterprise which has called into existence "resorts" upon these bleak and desolate sand-dunes.

Blankenberghe proves charming on acquaintance. At the back of the town lies the little Bassin or harbour into which the hundred or so of fishing-boats run through a narrow neck of sea between the jetties in bad weather. The front of the town is on the *digue*, with a network of quaintly narrow and somewhat ill-paved streets stowed away in the rear some twenty feet below its level. The charming villas and huge hotels which stretch for more than a mile along the *digue* form a satisfactory and imposing barrier to the seas which, when the north-east or north winds blow, rush in mountainous masses of water and foam across the wide expanse of sandy shore.

Blankenberghe is in a sense "Ostend in little." Its villas are quite as quaint, box-like and prettily garlanded during the season with a profusion of flowers. Its hotels are almost equally well-appointed, and more comfortable and moderate in their charges, if not so vast. There is no "Splendide," no "Royal Palace" at Blankenberghe (or was not last year; who knows what may have happened since then?), but there are several "Grands" and an "Ocean." All much frequented and delightfully situated.

Of late years there have, so we are told, been less English at Blankenberghe than formerly. The mark of the Teuton, and especially of the Jewish Teuton, is rather in evidence nowadays on the Front, and in the restaurants of the cafés

and hotels. And when this is so it would appear that the English are apt to depart. No one, we fancy, regrets the exchange more than the hotel proprietors, most of whom appear to have no particular love for the invading Germans.

“Blankenberghe,” said one to us, as we stood on the *digue* discussing the change which had come over the place since we first knew it, “is not so much the resort of English and Americans as formerly. It has become less unconventional, and at the same time more common. Of course, a large number of English still come to us. But they are those who have been driven away from Ostend by the high prices, or because there is no room for them. They are not the people who used to come because they liked the greater quiet and freedom of our Blankenberghe. The English—whose men seldom dressed for dinner, whose women wore linen dresses or blue serge all day long, and only of an evening or on Sunday dressed in anything at all elegant—they, many of them, nowadays go to Heyst and even to Knocke. I wish they would come back!” And the speaker sighed.

But “our Blankenberghe” might well be resorted to again by the English. It is so fresh, and if its women visitors (and some of the men who wear immaculate white boots, flannels and yachting-caps in the morning, and panamas with the same clothes in the afternoon; and swallow-tails and expansive shirt-fronts, with big diamond studs, and carry crush opera hats on the *digue* of an evening) are “playing up” to the Ostend standard of plutocratic elegance—well, what matter? As an American girl remarked to us at the Casino: “Some of them are funny enough for fits.”

Just the same life goes on along the *plage* as at Ostend. Only the ladies’ bathing costumes are more decorous, and Blankenberghe has its “Rotten Row” along the fine stretch of sand from the Estacade towards Zee-Brugge. Near the Estacade on fine days are a score of horses, ponies, and mules for hire, and they find many patrons. Even a donkey-ride at Blankenberghe is modish, and gay parties of horsemen and horsewomen gallop and amble over the widely stretching yellow sands on fine afternoons. Riding-habits appear to be only *de rigueur* for the early morning gallops of serious equestrians, and the same may be said regarding the attire of the men. Later in the day,



“free and easy” is the style ; muslin dresses, drill costumes, serge coats and skirts for the ladies. Tennis flannels, “Norfolk” knickerbocker suits (with or without gaiters) and even yachting attire, for the men ! And what treacherous pranks the North Sea wind sometimes plays with the diaphanous garments of the joyful, laughter-provoking equestriennes ! What glimpses one gets of those flimsy high-heeled shoes with pointed toes, of chrome or tan leather beloved of Parisiennes ! Of fragile openwork hose, of tempestuous petticoats which rival the rainbow in colour, or, if white, challenge by their diaphanousness the silvery foam which a north-easter sends scurrying along the angry water’s edge in flocculent masses.

Then there is the excitement of angling from the brick and stone groynes or jetty. How patient the Belgian angler is ! Like his Parisian prototype. One may go away from Blankenberghe with every prospect of coming back to find him still angling from the jetty or groynes, say a dozen seasons hence.

Then there is the steeplechasing on bicycles over the rounded brick groynes, which run along the coast from the Estacade towards Zee-Brugge ; though the sport is “rough” on the tyres and the welded steel of the frames.

From such amusements and scenes of lively enjoyment and gaiety, it is a great transition to the deserted churchyard, high grown with weeds, and filled with melancholy, decaying monuments, and earthward-inclining tombstones. Off the tin wreaths of immortelles the sea-air, frost and sun, have ruthlessly stripped the paint, until only a flake here and there remains in contrast with the red rust. The glass domes of the boxes under which waxen or tin floral offerings are enshrined, as though for forcing, is dull with salt, and desolation reigns. The old brick church, with its huge cracks in the outer walls, and staring whitewash within—in process of restoration, we believe—is not less melancholy and desolate. A derelict house of God set in a sea of rank green-grey grass, amid shoals of neglected and unattended graves and tombstones.

And yet this ancient churchyard carries its lesson, and sometimes, though not often, we fancy, the young and frivolous visitor will enter the gates ; and a Parisian toilette, modern with the modernness of to-morrow, will be

trailed amid the tombs. Or some bent crone will be found at sunset rambling amid them, seeking some half-forgotten grave.

This, we confess, was the only church in Blankenberghe which interested us; and with the little greengrocer's shop in the old street, with its red-tiled roof and quaint gables, just across the open space near the tiny Bassin de Retenue in which the fishing fleet is berthed, forms almost all that now remains of the Blankenberghe of but a few years ago.

But Blankenberghe is a delightful and engaging holiday resort for all that, and from it, as we have several times proved, many interesting places may be reached by cycling along passable, if not altogether good, roads.

Eastward, along the coast, lies the little town and pleasant *plage* of Heyst, on which brown-sailed, bluff-bowed trawlers run in calm seas to discharge their catch.

Heyst, we were compelled to come to the conclusion, is inaptly named. It is delightful, tranquil, even slow. It is in its infancy of development. It is distinctly in no hurry. It is a place to which the quiet folk have been driven by the incessant stir, gaiety, and life of Ostend, and the less meretricious (but now too formal) joys of Blankenberghe. It has a *digue* of its own, somewhat irregular of surface in places as yet; and a fine stretch of *plage*, sand-dunes cemented together with coarse grass and heather-like growth, and there are quite good hotels, as we found out, and moderate charges. But Heyst has yet to be. Along the unsophisticated front wander gipsy musicians, and a fiddler makes a good living by playing for coppers outside the villas and hotel windows. But these things are the evidences of tranquillity and not of fashion, of delight and not of grandeur. Here come yearly an increasing number of English visitors. Indeed, the language of the *plage* during the bathing hour seemed chiefly one's native tongue, and that odd experimental French of people practising. Here and there a Teutonic outline would appear clad in all its rotundity of male or female form in protesting bathing costume. But Heyst seemed to us quite English in all save its architecture, its fisher-folk, and somewhat solitary cabman.

Upon the wide stretch of *plage* people were bathing as we sat on one of the groyne and watched a fishing-boat making

for land under easy sail with trawl out. The costumes of the lady bathers were not of lace and silk, as are so many at Ostend, but in twill and serge of decorous but by no means unmeritorious designs, and of quite brightening colour scheme. Far out bobbed what at first looked like a buoy. A brilliant vermilion note in a sage-green sea. But it was a girl, swimming as no one is allowed to swim at more sophisticated Ostend. A sapphire-garbed nymph with her companion, a male of athletic physique, rushed past us, sprang down five feet or so on to the *plage*, and raced seaward, laughing. "*Anglais*," laconically remarked a native of pronounced proportions to her daughter at the other end of the seat. The bathers had come from the tiny band-box of a villa, a strip of red-brick masonry sandwiched in between an hotel and another villa. A poor wee squeezed thing, which had a look of protest about its neat, stone-dressed face, and in its elongated windows, which looked like startled eyes.

Yes, we thought, Heyst is delightful. It is informal. One could even venture to wear a last year's gown or an old suit on the *digue* itself, and amid the quietude of the environing sand-dunes far less.

The sand has been conquered in a measure at Heyst, and something here and there has been made to grow. But it is bracing rather than beautiful, though under a grey sky it has a certain picturesqueness of which brilliant sunlight is apt to rob it.

Pretty villas are springing up amid the dunes, set a little way inland, and in the gardens *in esse* surrounding them we caught sight of English children at play, the overflow of infantile humanity from the sea-front villas and hotels.

A little way along the coast, reached by one of the better class of Belgian roads with a good cycling track running alongside it, and one impinges upon the Dutch frontier. Knocke is to Heyst what Blankenberghe is to Ostend. It is just the same little distance—in proportion—down the scale of fashionableness. Knocke is year by year obtaining more and more support from English visitors. It is a quaint place—the sand lies in its main street of approach—where flourish *pensions* teeming with children who greet one with shouts of welcome as one cycles by. From many of the *pensions*, too, we noticed, came the sounds of phono-



graphs and gramophones playing excerpts from British musical comedies and American band selections.

The cabs are ancient at Knocke. They did not appear to be doing any great business. Perhaps people were afraid to go far in them! The *digue* is still in the making, but *digues* rise almost as quickly as mushrooms along this coast, and we may even as we write be doing the little place an injustice in this respect. The architecture of the front is of that unclassic irregularity which denotes the work of many minds, and a desire for variety. And the result had a quaintness which is attractive. The *plage* is goodly to look upon. On it croquet players, lawn-tennis players, and even golfers and bowlers disport themselves. And if the tennis balls twist, and break away half a mètre more than they should—well, what matter? it adds to sport and makes the players, be they girls or men, “extend themselves,” as a French acquaintance phrased it. And should a croquet ball disappear in the hoof-mark left by a bathing-machine horse—well, again, as my French acquaintance (who must have been a philosopher) said: “one knows where it is.”

We were forced whilst breathing the bracing air of Knocke, and gazing out over a beautiful expanse of sapphire sea, just broken here and there by plumes of white, to agree with the philosopher, who finally remarked: “Life is long enough for such small contretemps as these.”

One should see Knocke in sunset glow. Then the little place, with its windmill, its fields which lie at the back behind the dunes, its white cottages, its straggling street, its air of unconsidered planning, is really beautiful. And the fisher-folk, both men and women, are picturesque and virile; and some of the girls really handsome. Knocke, quaint and struggling to evolve into a resort, is just the place for tired folk, and children, for whom the yellow sands and lapping waves, and sea and sky are ever new. All these things are found at Knocke, as yet not spoiled by too much of human contact.

From Knocke it is but a matter of ten miles or so to Sluys. The quaint old stranded seaport, with its irregular mass of houses and fourteenth-century belfry, the town now only connected with the sea by canal.

To hark back westward of Ostend along the sea-coast there is less to interest one. One finds some miniature Ostends

—Mariakerke, Middelkerke, Westende, Nieuport, and La Panne—but if one except the two last none of them have the charm of Blankenberghe, Heyst, or Knocke, or the picturesqueness of the latter.

Mariakerke is now a suburb of Ostend itself, having been incorporated with its great neighbour ten years or more ago. The ride along the beautifully - paved *digue* is one to delight the heart of cyclist, though to trudge it may make weary the feet of pedestrian. There is nothing of interest in the new Mariakerke to which one comes. It consists of hotels, *pensions*, and villas one or two streets deep along the sea-front stretching out, as it were, importuning hands to Ostend. But a picturesque bit of old Mariakerke lies half hidden behind the sand-dunes, consisting of a quaint towered church and a group of red-roofed dwellings of fisher-folk and small farmers. As one speeds along this incomparable beach-fringed coast with the salt sea air banishing fatigue and ennui, one comes to the *bains de mer* of Middelkerke, with its hotels and villas set on top of the sand-dunes. Middelkerke boasts a Kurhaus ; but, although some fashionable folk resort to the little town, they seem to slough the trappings of convention and the toilettes of the boulevards. As one approaches the first houses upon the little *digue* one passes the lonely cabin in which is housed the watchman of the submarine cables, one of the arteries of commerce traversing the bottom of the North Sea. A little thing and the communication of nations is cut. One man to watch the wire along which passes almost each moment throughout the twenty-four hours of each day the news of nations and commercial transactions involving great issues.

As we sped by we wondered if the solitary watcher ever speculated over what was passing along the cable he guards. He gazed out over the sea in the oncoming dusk with eyes which told nothing save perhaps a desire to know what weather was in the keeping of to-morrow. He touched his cap in mechanical civility, and turned away to his charge. A picture of lonely responsibility that was not unimpressive.

Of Westendes there are two. The old set inland ; the new on the sea-front. The latter—as we saw it at sunset on a summer's evening—not without charm of a kind ; quietude and even an air of picturesqueness hanging about its villas amid the sand-dunes, and softening the too new architecture

of its hotels and *pensions*. There are, indeed, really quite charming villas at Westende, and boundaries are almost unknown. We rode a few feet off the brick cycling track amid the thick sown houses and found ourselves in someone's garden, negotiating the stooping figure of a gardener and the corner of a flower-bed, whose flowers were carrying on a gallant struggle against the invading sand. The man did not seem surprised—probably, indeed the thing often happened—but gave us a pleasant “*Bon soir*,” and smiled wearily.

On our twilight way to Nieuportville (leaving pleasant La Panne on the sea-coast near the French frontier) and the charming village of the same name secreted inland amid the sand-dunes, one remembered vaguely that two hundred and fifty years ago these same sandy stretches, and flat arid fields were the battle-ground in a struggle between the Dutch under Prince Maurice of Orange, and their Spanish foes led by the Archduke Albert.

Sometimes, so we were told, the tiller of the ungrateful soil turns up casques, halberts, and swords of long ago, which are handled with appraising irreverence and ultimately find their way to the curiosity-mongers of Ostend and Bruges.



## CHAPTER IV

### ALONG OLD ROADS IN WEST FLANDERS AND HAINAUT TO COURTRAI

THE road to Nieuport ("ville" not "bains") along which we sped in the dusk of a July evening, with the fields going a grey-green in the fading light, and the white-walled cottages looking almost ghostly set amid the environing pastures, is not a too excellent one. The cyclist track proved to be worn into holes, which a sharp shower or two that had swept inland from the sea had filled. But the air was fresh with just a touch of salt in it, and the scent of the earth good. Just as dusk was falling we reached the canal stretching like a silver-grey ribbon eastward to join the one to distant Bruges. Then, on the other hand, a vista of the Yser was caught on its way to the sea at Nieuport-Bains, with barges and fisher-craft making up it to their berths alongside the wooden quays, where several steamers lay bulking large in the faint yellow evening light.

It was a quaint town into which we rode. A place of unexpected *culs-de-sac*; ill-paved for the most part and already half-asleep, though the hour was but nine or thereabouts. As luck would have it, the hotel we had chosen (because Baedeker put it first), which we found with some difficulty, had an air of sleep and even desertion that was depressing to weary and hungry travellers. We looked at it.

Not a light was to be seen. We knocked upon the old door at the top of some crumbling steps. No one came.

Then a passing citizen told us it was "*ferme*." It had failed to attract sufficient customers. Few people, we were told, came nowadays to Nieuport to stay save artists, since that there was a Nieuport-Bains with "attrac-

tions." And so the Hôtel de l'Espérance, which in truth had been our sheet-anchor for bed and board, was—"ferme."

"Try the hotel, messieurs, near the quay and tramway," our informant advised. But he added the cold comfort that it might be full, as there had been a wedding—such a wedding! (and he lifted his hands)—that afternoon.

Over the roughly-paved streets, round what seemed to be innumerable corners, we rode, and then the gaily-lighted façade of the hotel appeared welcome enough before us. The place was in an uproar. But luckily we could have the one room that was vacant. We were honoured, because it had been the chamber of the bridegroom the night before!

Oh, the importance of this wedding! The chambermaid, a buxom damsel, ample of figure, and pleasant if not lovely of face, talked of it on the way to our apartment on the third floor, where mosquito-blinds in the windows made us apprehensive—unnecessarily, as it proved—of a night made restless by these pests, which in Belgium and Holland flourish along the canals and in the towns intersected by them. The waitress who brought in the soup tureen of mussels, the well-cooked steak, the spinach with eggs, the salad which she dressed in front of us, whilst talking of the sweetness of the bride and the goodness of the groom, who had but an hour or so before sped away to Paris ("Oh, Paris is a wonderful city, and so far away, so very far distant," the maid volunteered), was full of the wedding. And so was the proprietor, who looked in to see that we were properly served. He positively beamed, for the hotel, which stood at the corner of a strangely deserted street, we warrant had not been so completely filled with guests for many a long day.

Through the blue-grey obscurity of the unlighted streets we afterwards made our way towards the murmurous sounds of gathered people. Beneath a triumphal arch we passed into a by-street. Green garlands hung from rickety "masts," up which adventurous *gamins*, and even *gamines*, were climbing in the endeavour to see what was going on in one of the old mansions of long ago, now a blaze of light, which contrasted strongly with the darkness of the streets.

We knew, but we asked the solitary *gendarme*, a tallish, stout man, resplendent in his best clothes:

"What is in progress, monsieur?"

He replied: "Is it possible that monsieur has not heard? To-day is the wedding of Dr. X. and Mlle. B. Dr. X., he indeed is a fine fellow. I have known him years, monsieur. And Mlle. B.? Ah! pretty? Yes, and good—so charitable to the poor! So religious! It is well for women to be so. She will be missed—yes, sorely missed. They had known each other from childhood. It was very touching. He went away to Paris to study medicine; now he has come back and carried away the most charming young lady in Nieuport. Yes, surely."

And then we learned that the whole of the *gendarmérie* and twenty old people had been entertained to breakfast. The stout *gendarme* did not say he was the only *custodien de la ville*, but we suspected he was. The feast provided for these twenty-one people seemed to bulk Gargantuan in his mind. Nieuport had not had such gaiety for years!

Every now and again through the curtained doorway of the house where the reception was being held came the faint sound of a tiny orchestra struggling to make its music heard above the hum of conversation and laughter of the guests. The strains of the "Merry Widow" waltz floated out, and the crowd stopped its scuffling and movement to listen.

"Hush," exclaimed our friend the *gendarme*, as though some sacred rite were in progress, "Monsieur le Maire is dancing!"

We hope our smile escaped his notice; we think it did, for the curtain fell once more across the doorway as two of the guests stepped out on to the sidewalk to take the air. The bare white arms and shoulders of the girl, who was *décolletée* with the recklessness of a well-formed provincial copying the fashion of the metropolis, competed for notice with the gay ribbon and "decoration" on the lapel of the coat of her escort.

"You would think mademoiselle were about to wash herself," remarked a bare-headed girl of sixteen or so, with a smile which showed a perfect row of white teeth.

"Monsieur de K.," remarked the woman at her side, "is fine to-night with his decoration. He is a handsome *parti* for any woman."

We stood in the narrow, ancient street till the crowd began to thin. The *gendarme* yawned discreetly behind a huge hand gloved in white cotton.



"You are staying here, monsieur, with monsieur your compatriot?" he asked. And when we shook our heads, he hazarded the opinion that we were Americans. It is always, one saw, the Americans who move on.

Leaving our *gendarme*, we made our way through the now rapidly thinning throng back to our hotel. The proprietor was eager to know what we had seen; but we were tired, and climbed up to our room.

We fell asleep. There was nothing in the appearance of the hotel to suggest to the mind of the most nervous of persons that it was haunted. The fitful moonlight of a cloudy summer's night lay in a patch on the floor, where it fell through a gap in the tiled roof between the quaintly shaped chimneys. Suddenly we were aroused by a sense of some one's presence, and, upon opening our eyes, we saw standing at the bedside a white figure, which was bending towards the bed and seeking to search for something under the pillow. Then something was dragged forth (it was not our watch or purse), and the figure turned to depart. By that time we were thoroughly aroused.

"Halte là!" we cried out. The figure stopped and turned.

Then it spoke rapidly, and with many and profuse apologies explained that "it," the best man of the wedding, had occupied the room the previous night, and that a forgetful chambermaid had left "its" pyjamas beneath the pillow instead of removing them to the other room.

"I thought, monsieur," said the young fellow contritely, "that I could remove them without disturbing your rest. But monsieur is a light sleeper!"

And with these words the embarrassed intruder vanished.

In the morning Monsieur le Propriétaire and his good and substantially built better-half were profuse in their apologies. The former called *le visiteur* by some uncommonly violent and uncomplimentary names. We only smiled, and suggested that had the episode taken place in an American hotel, *le visiteur* might have been shot. "Quel horreur!" exclaimed madame, turning pale; adding: "But yes, monsieur, you are a brave man. Certainly, you are a brave man!"

Nieuport is one of those strange, almost dead townlets which lie scattered so thickly in West Flanders. It has a

past; its present is peaceful and untroubled; its future—who can tell? Nieuport-Bains has drawn away so many of those who used to frequent it, for even artists nowadays (so we learned) “paint at Nieuport and sleep at Nieuport-Bains.” But those to whom an old Flemish seaport has attractions the newer Nieuport will not seduce. There is not a little of interest and much that is picturesque in the life of Yser, into which, with the flowing tide, steal red-sailed fishing-craft, and cargo steamers of some considerable tonnage to discharge their burdens of fish, timber, cement, coal, or bricks alongside the wooden quays. The Nieuport fishermen, too, are a fine and hardy and picturesque race, such as painters love, and the “fine ladies of fashionable Nieuport-Bains,” when they visit the older town, regard with scarce concealed admiration.

In the narrow streets, ill-paved and undulating strangely, which lead from the quays to the grass-grown Market Place, where are many quaint old houses, several of the larger—old-time mansions when Nieuport was a place of note—are surrounded by picturesque, old-fashioned gardens, and shut in by crumbling walls. Through a gap in one of these we caught sight of a garden rich in colouring, where roses red and yellow, and pink, and white were blooming; jasmine was climbing over an arbour; and sunflowers and hollyhocks flourished statelily. And almost clinging to the skirts of this bower of colour and fragrance were hovels scarcely fit for the habitation of men and women, made malodorous by the fish which were threaded on skewers and hung in the windows to dry, or upon strings in the rooms of the houses themselves. Almost every house of the poorer sort seemed to be a fish-curing establishment upon a small scale. It was evidently one of the “features” of the place.

Along one of the switchback streets one reaches the wide Market Place, deserted on all the days we have seen it, save for an occasional pedestrian, or a wandering motor, which, bound for Nieuport-Bains, had lost its bearings. Of the old ninth-century castle fortress, which did good service against the aggressive Normans in long-past times, not a trace remains. But near by this Market Place, in which apparently markets are no longer or seldom held, stand the fifteenth-century Cloth Hall, and the massive baroque bell tower of long ago. The outside of the ancient and fine

Gothic church, which is also on the Market Place, has a sadly neglected air. Even the trees that stud what was perhaps once an enclosed churchyard seem uncared for, and look as though they had been the sport of the fierce North Sea wind, though affording a welcome shade. But within the building, which we fancy many are, from the unprepossessing exterior, deterred from entering, there are some treasures which will reward the curious. Among them is a beautiful example of Renaissance screens, and an ancient rood-loft. It is not the original one, of which the doorway and the attached shafts at the side of it remain, but the old Gothic design was followed. Upon the central panel of the projecting ambon there is a standing figure of the Saviour, with His right hand uplifted and His left clasping an orb. In the niches on either side are figures of the Apostles, each separated by very chaste composite pillarets.

There are two interesting altarpieces on either side of the entrance, one representing the Trinity with the figure of our Lord seated and crowned with thorns, and holding the reed in His hand; with the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovering in the clouds. Above all is the figure of the Eternal Father, represented as an aged man with outstretched hands. A work which cannot fail to arouse interest in the minds of all those for whom antiquity and ecclesiastical relics have a charm.

The subject of the other altarpiece is Our Lady of Seven Dolours, and represents the Holy Mother seated with her breast pierced by seven swords in conventional manner. Over her hovers a dove encircled by rays.

Competent authorities incline to the belief that the screen, the tabernacle for the Reserved Sacrament, and other furniture, were placed in the church at about the same period (probably somewhere in the early half of the fifteenth century), to take the place of others which had been destroyed, possibly at the time of one of the sieges of the town, or during an outburst of iconoclastic zeal such as took place in our own land during the dominance of the Puritans.

The choir stalls, which are very tasteful, should not be overlooked, and there is some passable stained glass, and several ancient tombs.

The Hôtel de Ville contains some pictures, a few of which



are interesting as, at least, reputed examples of the early Flemish school. Of the Templar's Castle nothing but the donjon remains; the rest was destroyed more than five centuries ago, when the Ghent burghers and the English joined forces and burned the town.

Fewer folk even than those visiting Nieuport go to quaint, dull Furnes, which only seems to awaken into semblance of active life on the last Sunday in July of each year, as it has done since the twelfth century. Then takes place that great procession, to view which come the butterflies of Ostend, the burghers of Bruges, Ghent, Courtrai, Tournai, and other towns, and the country-folk from far and wide. Through the ancient streets of Furnes, which for the rest of the year are frequented by few aliens, marches the great procession of members of the "Confrérie de la Sodalité," in costume depicting the Story of the Passion. It is an impressive sight, and those who are in the crowded streets, or amid the throng in the quaint old Grande Place, will not easily forget the experience.

In the sixteenth-century Renaissance Hôtel de Ville, which stands in the Grande Place, there are some exceedingly interesting wall-hangings of Spanish leather, and a notable chimneypiece with decorations attributed to Snyders, although examination does not tend to confirm the supposition that these representations of still-life are by that artist. The old Flemish tapestry, and particularly two doorways, are also worth notice.

The Palais de Justice, formerly the old Châtellenie, erected from the designs of Sylvanus Boulton in 1612-1628, is of considerable interest. In the antechamber on the first floor the Inquisition used to hold its meetings. And tradition states it was also in this chamber that the rack and other horrible instruments were set up and torture inflicted. The Inquisition at the time of Alva seems to have been an unusually active and cruel institution, some of its victims being tortured and murdered as much for political as for pseudo-religious motives. The large painting by Albert de Vriendt, a modern artist and of the school of Hendrik Leys, the founder of the so-called archaic school of painting, depicting Philippe le Bel taking the oath to preserve the liberties of Furnes in 1500, is a vigorous and interesting piece of work. One of the oldest

Hôtels de Ville in Belgium is to be seen in the Pavillon des Officiers Espagnols on the eastern side of the Grande Place. This building, now a library and the home of the municipal archives of Furnes, dates in part from the thirteenth century, and is interesting from its great antiquity. Furnes, of course, possesses a belfry, the massive tower of which, rising from behind the Palais de Justice, attracts attention immediately one enters the Market Place.

The chief church—which stands upon the site of a ninth-century building founded by Baldwin of the Iron Arm, the founder also of the famous line of Counts of Flanders who in the tenth and eleventh centuries especially played an important part in the history, especially of the north and western part, of what is now known as the Kingdom of Belgium—was commenced somewhere about the beginning of the fourteenth century. It was designed upon a scale of great size and magnificence; but alas! the resources of the burghers and ecclesiastics of Furnes were unequal to the task. Thus it is that St. Walburga's is incomplete, consisting merely of the choir and the chapels attached to it. It stands as a monument of unattained priestly ambition; one of the few great churches in Belgium which fell far so short of their designer's plan.

Quaint Furnes has many other attractions for artist and antiquarian, and those who linger at the Hôtel de la Noble Rose just off the Market Place, whose fifteenth-century savour attracted us more than the hope of luxurious accommodation or epicurean delights, will discover for themselves many charming survivals of the militant, busy, medieval town of long ago.

It is pleasant though not direct going from Furnes to quaint Dixmude on the Yser. The country-side is picturesque, if flat, and one has not yet got quite away from the salt freshness of sea air, and the remembrance of sand-dunes. At Dixmude, as at Furnes, there is a wonderful Grande Place, looking vastly deserted in the evening light as we entered it by a roundabout way of the Petit Quay, which looks like a piece of Ghent in miniature. Many years ago—perhaps ages ago, indeed—there might have been the need of this Grande Place, out over which shone the discreetly bright beams from the Café de la Paix.

Now one is tempted to wonder whether it is ever much frequented save perhaps at fair time.

The key to the life of Dixmude of to-day seems given by the anciently picturesque windmill, which stands upon its grass-grown mound at the entrance to the town. The old mill is of the past, its timbers have weathered many a gale from the not far distant sea; it has seen men come and go; the marching of armies, the engaging and romantic strife of the Middle Ages (for the mill is many centuries old, we are informed), and like the town itself appears to be falling into that gentle decay which overtakes all somnolent and brooding things. It and the picturesque *béguinage*, with its tiny double chapel squeezed in between the two rows of houses, and with a quaint triangular grass-plat in front of it, give a picturesque charm to one's initial explorations.

Dixmude is a place in which to linger; because it is one of the backwaters of modern life, where rest and even vegetating appear to be natural.

The wonderful parish church of St. Nicholas, with houses almost built on its walls, is famous for its exquisite rood loft and screen ascribed to Urban Taillebert of Ypres. Amid the rich flamboyant carving of this, light with elegant tracery, like veritable filigree in stone, stand the figures of angels, saints and martyrs, with the great, sweet-toned organ above them all.

The people of Dixmude are justly proud of their great church, and its beautiful *Jubé*, and as we sat in the café looking out across the wide Grande Place, silvered and made vaster and yet more mysterious by July moonlight, the one question which seemed to agitate the minds of the habitués, after they had enquired whence we had come, was, had we seen the *Jubé*?

"Ah, it is magnificent!" exclaimed one enthusiast, apparently the local shoemaker, putting down his glass and wiping his mouth. "There is, messieurs, nothing like it," he paused, and then added confidently—"no, not in all Flanders."

And, indeed, for beauty of design the rood screen of Dixmude cannot be easily excelled. Indeed, by many architectural judges a verdict is given concerning it which closely coincides with that of the shoemaker.

From Dixmude there are two routes to Ypres. One



travels back a mile or two towards Furnes, then running south-west to Loo, and on to Oost Vleteren, and then south-west to Ypres. The other (more direct) route runs almost due south from Dixmude to Boesinghe. This is a fine road most of the way, running through rich grazing land, and past many a dairy farm, the produce of which finds its way across the North Sea to London and other English markets. For quite a considerable distance the road runs alongside the canal, with pleasant fields on the right-hand as one travels towards Ypres, and a peaceful vista of white-walled farmsteads, and wide stretching lush fields on the left across the canal.

To those who journey by road to Ypres, a word of warning. One should seldom ask for a short cut in Belgium; never, we think, on the way to Ypres. If the wayfarer should do so, whether he be on foot or on a cycle, he will inevitably be sent a rough road. If walking, it may not so much matter, because one sees the peasantry working in the fields and typical farmsteads; but when one is cycling, then troubles commence. The route—called by our informant “*la route la plus directe*”—we were sent in search of, a delusive short cut, was most of the way but a track for carts across the fields, made in soft weather, one would judge, and hardened into treacherous and frame-twisting ruts by the summer sun; in many places unridable, and not infrequently dangerous. On one side there was the canal, into which to plunge should a “wobble” occur, on the other a deep ditch full of brambles and stinging-nettles!

But Ypres, or Yperen, as it is called in Flemish, is well worth some trouble to reach. The wise wayfarer, however, will do well to avoid arriving late at night, for by half-past nine or ten o'clock (at least, such is our experience) most Ypres folk have sought their beds; and even the hotel proprietors and sleepy “boots” will not allow their delight at seeing a stray tourist to evince itself too openly.

Ypres, on the Yperlée, is one of the most interesting of West Flanders cities, and for an ancient town it is quite noticeable for the width and cleanliness of its main streets. Surrounding it are yet to be found some traces of the old fortifications, and two-thirds of the place are still encircled by ancient ramparts and a wide moat. Near the old and picturesque Porte de Lille, reached from the Grande Place

by the Rue de Lille, swans swim in the weedy moat ; and in the tumbledown houses, some of them dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, live the lace-makers, who sit at their open casements on fine, warm days, passing their multitudinous thread bobbins to and fro across the cushions, and chaffing the passers-by.

Some of the girls have a pretty wit, as instanced by one who, sitting at her door with a girl companion, whom a passing sweep had offered to kiss, exclaimed, upon hearing her angry companion advise Jean to go and get washed before he offered to kiss a pretty girl : " Oh, Monsieur Jean never washes. He fears to catch a cold."

This picturesque and fascinating town has nowadays, save at fair times, when the Grande Place blossoms with booths and gaily-painted roundabouts, and is thronged with merrymakers, an air of peace rather than industry. Indeed, it is almost impossible nowadays to realize that Ypres was once one of the wealthiest and most powerful commercial towns in Flanders, with a population of upwards of 200,000 souls, and no less than 4,000 cloth-looms constantly at work. In the eleventh century the cloth-weavers of Ypres were famous. And so they remained until the siege of the town, and the burning of the suburbs by the aggressive burghers of Ghent in 1383. By the end of the fifteenth century the population of the once great city, owing to the devastations of the iconoclasts, plagues, and sieges, had fallen to a paltry 15,000. Nor were the years of the immediately succeeding century more favourable to the stricken town. During that period it was taken no less than four times by the French, who held it for three-quarters of a century.

Should the wanderer reach Ypres after dusk, as we did, it will be with real delight that he views the Grande Place next morning, and looks upon the magnificent Hôtel de Ville and Cloth Hall. One remembers it was in this Market Square that Philip Van Artevelde addressed the populace from a scaffolding, when he felt secure that the King of France, who, with his forces, threatened their liberties, would be unable to cross the river Lys.

" Good people," he exclaimed, " be not alarmed if the King of France shall march against us. He will never cross the Lys, as I have had all the passes well guarded, and

have ordered Peter du Bois to advance to Commynes with a large body of brave men. He is a bold man, to whom the honour of Flanders is dear. I have sent Peter le Nuitre to Warneton, and broken down the bridges on the Lys, and there is neither pass nor ford but these two. Our friends in England are coming to help us. Keep, therefore, to your oaths sworn to us in the good town of Ghent; and now let those who will maintain the rights and franchises of Flanders hold up their hands."

There was for a moment a great silence, we are told, in the sunlit Grande Place, and then with a deafening shout the multitudes to a man held up their hands in sign of loyalty. When this had been done, Van Artevelde descended from his platform, and left Ypres for Oudenarde next day. But brave as had been the words of the famous burgher of Ghent, they were being falsified even whilst he was addressing his fellow Flamands, just as across the North Sea the hopes of the downtrodden and cruelly-treated populace in England were being dashed to the ground by the murder of Wat the Tyler, their champion, in Smithfield.

Not long and the forces of Charles VI., King of France, were overrunning Flanders, and the brave burghers of her chief cities were falling by the thousand.

The Hôtel de Ville and the Cloth Hall, which are under one vast roof, and were commenced by Count Baldwin of Flanders in the first year of the thirteenth century, form one of the largest buildings of its kind in Belgium. English people may gain some idea of its long frontage when it is remembered that it falls but a few feet short of that of the National Gallery. The building, which faces nearly north-east, and stands above an arcade abutting upon the more ancient Gothic structure, was finished about the middle of the seventeenth century, and although picturesque and interesting, is far less elegant and artistic than its beautiful neighbour, the general effect of which has undoubtedly been lessened by the filling-in of the square-headed colonnade at the base of the façade. The effect has caused the design to appear rather flat, and deprived it of richness and of lightness. It is easy to imagine, as one stands before the long façade with its elegant and beautiful windows, the lower ones set within pointed arches, and separated by finely formed groups of clustered shafts, with the heads graced



with rich tracery and bearing a quatrefoil, the upper row loftier and more acutely formed with even richer traceries, with a quatrefoil and trefoil alternating in their heads, how immensely enhanced the beauty of the building would be were the filling-in of the colonnade removed, and play given to the shadows which would then lurk, and give relief, as no doubt the architect intended.

The fine and impressive belfry, placed in the centre of the steeply-inclined roof, with its four crocketed pinnacles at the four corners, possesses an octagonal spire of most elegant proportions. In this a new peal or carillon has recently been placed. The old one having become "tinny" in tone, and when last we slept close beneath it, alas! (through its mechanism being out of repair) it insisted upon chiming every seven and a half minutes. For some time afterwards we avoided hotels that lay near belfries.

The tower which served the town as a belfry was one of the first portions of the building to be erected. The first stone of this part of the famous and beautiful building was laid by Baldwin IX., Count of Flanders and Emperor of Constantinople, in the presence of his wife, Mary of Champagne, Herlibalde, chief bailiff of Ypres, and a vast concourse of citizens and their wives on March 1, 1201. Ypres, in common with many other Belgian and French towns, profited by the Crusading fever to purchase freedom and privileges from its rulers, who found money melt away in the costly pursuit of fighting the forces of Saladin, and struggling to possess the Holy Land. Often, however, these privileges which enterprising burghers purchased from impecunious rulers, for their own benefit and that of their town, were of transient value. The "commercial morality" of kings and princes in the Middle Ages does not appear always to have been very high. It was so easy to rescind the privileges which had been granted when money was needed, so that they might be sold again.

The belfry and the main or centre portion of the Hôtel de Ville and Cloth Hall was more than a century in course of building, and the old Hall, or right wing, was not completed until 1230. The Cloth Hall, or more eastern wing, although not begun until 1285, was finished in the same year as the belfry. The Conciergerie is at the back of the Hôtel de Ville facing the Church of St. Martin. It can be



GRANDE PLACE, CLOTH HALL AND OLD HOUSES, YPRES





reached through a passage under the eastern portion or seventeenth-century additions to the Cloth Hall. Formerly—until, in fact, the latter were erected—the whole block was isolated and much more imposing. The Hôtel de Ville contains the former Salle Échevinale, which, situate in the centre of what is at Ypres known as the Nieuwerk (the Renaissance structure erected in 1620, and following years, probably from designs by Jan Sporeman) contains some excellent and interesting frescoes by Gottfried Guffens and Jan P. Swerts, comprising scenes from the chief events of the town's history. It should be noted that until the afternoon, on account of the light, these cannot be well seen, and we found them worth choosing the best time. The upper floor of the Cloth Hall has three enormous galleries with wooden roofs. In this portion of the building, the eastern half of the south wing, are contained some fine frescoes by the well-known artist, William Ferdinand Pauwels, also depicting incidents in the history of the city. The portion covered by the paintings comprises about two centuries, and some of the most stirring events took place between the dates 1176, when the Hospital of the Virgin was founded, and 1383, when the city was besieged and a great portion of it burned. One of the most vigorous and dramatic of the series of pictures is that depicting the horrors of the great Plague, which swept through the Low Countries in 1347 and decimated the population of many of the great towns, Ypres among the number.

The façade of the Hôtel de Ville and Cloth Hall was originally adorned with fine statues of the Counts and Countesses of Flanders and famous citizens of Ypres, which, placed there in 1513, were destroyed by the French Republican forces in December, 1792. The figures were replaced between the years 1854 and 1875. In the same year as that in which the statues were originally placed in the niches a double flight of steps were added in the fourth opening leading to the first floor by which the Hôtel de Ville was reached. This was destroyed about the year 1860. The statue, which stands on a bracket and beneath a lofty tabernacle, is that of "Our Lady of the Palisades," who was adopted as patroness of the town during the memorable siege of 1383, when Henry Spenser, Bishop of Norwich, grandson of the ill-starred favourite of Edward II.,

assisted by 20,000 Gantois (Ghent was the only place which had held out against Charles VI., King of France, and Count Louis of Flanders, known as "Van Maele"), sat down before Ypres to besiege it. The garrison of Count Louis were in a parlous state: they were threatened by the English and Ghent burghers without, and the Ypres citizens, whom they had subdued, but not conquered, within. The fierceness of the assault is quaintly illustrated by the statement which occurs in a contemporary account that "in one day were picked up in the streets of Ypres so many arrows as to fill over-full two tuns."

Much of the severest fighting took place on the outskirts of the town, in the palisades—which gave their name to the patron saint we have referred to.

The King of France himself, however, came hurrying to the relief of his beleaguered forces under Count Louis, and the militant English Bishop of Norwich promptly took to flight.

In the rear of the Hôtel de Ville and Cloth Hall, and rather overshadowed by them, stands the beautiful Cathedral Church of St. Martin, with its unfinished western tower. St. Martin's was for two and a half centuries, from 1559-1801, the cathedral of Ypres. The church was founded in 1073\* by Robert le Frison, but the most ancient part of the present church, the chancel, only dates from 1221, when it was rebuilt by Hugues, Provost of St. Martin. The early Gothic nave and aisles were rebuilt in 1254, after having been destroyed by fire, on the initiative of the successor of Hugues. This portion was finished twelve years later, and was consecrated with great pomp and ceremony in 1270. The present tower, the height of which is 188 feet, was never finished (this is also the case with that of Malines), took the place of a former one, the first brick being laid in 1434, two centuries after its destruction, by Anastasie D'Oulne, Viscountess of Ypres. The architect was the famous Martin Utenhove of Malines.

The east end of this imposing church, the nave of which is lofty and elegant, was beautifully restored in the middle of the last century. It is of brick, with light buttresses close to the wall, and the clerestory is formed by lancets between each pair of buttresses. The extremely pretty

\* Some authorities give a date a decade later.

carved moulding beneath the dripstone of the window, consisting of leaves and flowers, should be specially noticed. It is an unusually elegant feature. The tracery of no two windows is alike. Those in the choir are triplets, and have detached shafts in front, forming a rear vault between them and the proper mullions of the windows. The effect is striking and elegant, and one should note how greatly this is brought about by the existence of an external wall passage at the sills of the lancets, for which the buttresses are pierced.

It is impossible to describe in detail this beautiful building, whose lofty and elegant nave at once impresses the beholder with its beauty of proportion, but there are a few other points which will strike even those whose knowledge of the technicalities of architecture, which so often reveals the deeper and underlying beauty of a building, may be limited. In the south wall of the transept, for instance, is an exquisite rose window, which by many authorities is considered one of the finest and most beautiful in Belgium. It is fourteenth-century work, and the glass is unusually beautiful in colouring and design. The very elegant porch beneath it is of a like date, and contains some statues of the Virgin and saints. In the gable above the rose window is a blind arcade with good tracery, whilst the gable itself is flanked by turrets in the Decorated Style, but apparently of much later date.

The general plan of the church is cruciform, with an aisleless polygonal chancel. The south end of the transept has double aisles; the north end only a single one, the aisle on its western side being lacking. The aisles of the transept on the east side of the church are divided from the chapels by very elegant cylindrical shafts, one of which, it will be noticed, is considerably out of the perpendicular.

The choir is a beautiful one, but possesses neither ambulatory nor chapels. In it are some fine stalls of late Renaissance work, carved by Urban Taillebert during the last year or two of the sixteenth century. The painting of the Assumption, placed over the high altar, which is in baroque style, is ascribed (possible wrongly) to Luca Giordano. The small flat stone which is in front of the altar of St. Martin has some historical interest in that it marks the burial-place of Cornelius Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres, the



founder of the Jansenist sect, believers in the doctrine of free grace which aroused so fierce a controversy in the Roman Church on the publication of the bishop's "Augustinus" two years after his death. The doctrine of the sect is still accepted by many in Utrecht and Haarlem at the present day.

From the tower of the church, which is well worth ascending, although it entails the climbing of almost as many steps as there are days in the year, a fine panoramic view of Ypres and its many churches is obtained. On a fine day one can see for a radius of some forty miles, and an excellent idea of the general character of West Flanders scenery is gained.

The general effect of the interior of the Cathedral is very good, owing chiefly to the fine proportions and length and breadth of the nave; to the absence of seventeenth-century choir screens (which have been installed in too many Belgian churches) and, above all, to the rare beauty of the chancel, than which we know of none finer in Belgium as regards its general impression. On the day upon which we last entered it it was beautifully decorated for a festival. From the roof depended long banners in delicate colours, pale bright blue (the Virgin's colour), grey, mauve, rose and pale orange; with Maltese crosses, the triple cross, and other ecclesiastical devices embroidered upon them. The altars were masses of exquisite flowers, and some of them draped with delicately tinted fabrics to match the depending banners which waved over the heads of a vast congregation, many of the women and children of which were gay and picturesque in the peasant costumes.

During Mass we had an evidence of the immense strides that photography, under unfavourable conditions of lighting, has made with the assistance of ultra-rapid plates and lenses working at a large aperture. Also how even ecclesiasticism upon the Continent has had to give way before the popular demand for pictorial records of important events. Just inside the main door a temporary scaffold had been erected, and from it several photographers were busily engaged in photographing the scene—even during the Elevation of the Host! We have a shrewd suspicion that the verger and the "Suisse," the latter resplendent in a gorgeous red, orange, and blue uniform, "had their doubts" regarding

the propriety of the proceeding, but no one else seemed to pay any attention to the men whose cameras clicked so industriously during the service.

The old parish chapel, or Chapel of the Sacrament, is of considerable size and especially interesting. It is divided from the aisle by a fine seventeenth-century brass grille, mounted in coloured marbles, and having its piers richly carved and decorated with alabaster statuettes of saints. The roof of the chapel is of wood, and some of the original painting remains with faded carving and gilding; the general effect is quaint and picturesque; but the later element of charm is rather the effect of time than a part of the original design of the architect.

In this part of the Cathedral there are many quaint pictures meriting more than a cursory examination. One in the chapel we have just referred to is reputed to be the work of Franz P. Hals. It bears the inscription "Ipra ab Anglis et Rebellibus obsessa, Anno 1383," and relates to the siege of the town by the Bishop of Norwich and his English companions, and the Gantois troops of that date, to which reference has already been made. The picture shows a view of the town, part of which is in flames, and the country round about. The English army is accommodated with tents; and among them is seated a prince of royal blood with *or*, three lions *passant, gardant gules* emblazoned upon his surcoat, and on the banner above him. A knight wearing the same arms, in repulsing a sally is depicted thrusting a lance into a man, who is issuing from the burning city. Near by is seen a group of knights with an English prince at their head. Men are seen firing into the city, and assaults being made. The picture is divided into two parts separated by an open space. In the other half a long procession of monks and nuns is seen being received by the town. They are bearing with them the statue of "Our Lady of the Palisade," through whose instrumentality plus the advance of the French King and his forces the plundering, filibustering Bishop of Norwich was made to retire from his siege of Ypres.

In connection with this interesting chapel there is a quaint old custom observed at funerals of placing upon the altar a loaf, a cruets, and a piece of money. How the custom arose we have been unable to discover, though it

is obviously connected with the Breton one of providing food for the dead. It dates from at least three and a half centuries ago.

There are many other interesting buildings in Ypres. Some stand in the principal streets—two are situated close to the Hôtel de Ville in the Grande Place; others are only to be discovered by the wanderer who, in his enthusiasm (and what more charming pursuit is there when in a quaint old town than the discovery of architectural and antiquarian treasures unnoted in the average guide-books?), explores the side streets and winding narrow alleys, particularly in the northern portion of the town. The three Guild Houses in the Marché au Bétail, the numbers of which are 15, 19, and 21; the houses in the Nouveau Marché au Bois, and especially the Maison Biebuyck in the Rue de Dixmude—all are worth attentive study as most excellent examples of fifteenth and sixteenth century domestic architecture.

The Maison Biebuyck is one of the finest and most beautiful Gothic houses in all Belgium—a delight to the artistic eye and to the antiquarian mind. The Hospice Belle, but a couple of hundred yards from the Grande Place down the handsome and wide Rue de Lille, an asylum for old women, founded in or about the year 1279 by Christine de Guines, and rebuilt in 1616, is also worth a visit. In it there is a notable votive picture of the Madonna and Child and the donors on a gilt ground, and a polychrome votive relief, both dating from the year 1420, and of great antiquarian and historical interest. In the Marché-Bas, quite close to the Grande Place, in the Rue du Verger, stands the Boucherie, or Meat Market, one of the oldest houses left. It is a double-fronted building of Gothic design, the stone lower stories of which are thirteenth-century work. The first floor is now the Municipal Museum, containing some good collections. There is a most interesting sixteenth-century plan of the city; and in the second room are some old views of the city, which are of great interest. We also noticed amongst the collection of pictures a sketch of the Miracles of St. Benedict, attributed to Rubens.

Perhaps the most interesting house to the ordinary tourist or traveller who comes to Ypres, and who possesses not sufficient knowledge of architecture or antiquities to



fully appreciate the old houses we have been noting, will be the really charming Hôtel Merghelynck at the corner of the Rue de Lille, and the Marché aux Vieux Habits (Old Clothes Market), built during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Since 1892 this house has been fitted up and devoted to the purposes of an eighteenth-century museum, which is wonderfully complete and interesting. As one enters the hall, one is surrounded with a complete collection of furniture and fittings of the period. It was an eighteenth-century clock, an elegant "grandfather," which chimed the hour of three, and an eighteenth-century scraper which invited us to clean (as it was a fine July afternoon) imaginary dirt from our boot-soles as we stepped into the lobby. In the *entresol* are many objects of interest and almost priceless value. In the *salle à manger* the illusion of eighteenth-century life is skilfully carried out. The table is laid for dinner, the appointments—the glass, silver, cutlery, china—are all in character, and on the buffet stand wine-glasses of the period, and bottles of rare wines, spirits, and liqueurs, for the use of the ghostly guests one can almost fancy one sees sitting in the high-backed chairs. Not a piece of furniture is out of character, and not an engraving upon the walls but is of the period.

The same is the case with the *salon*, on the tables of which are choice eighteenth-century books of fashions, poetry, copperplates, and some Elzevirs. On the spinet, or harpsichord, were opened pages of music of the same period, looking as though the players had but just turned the leaves ere getting up from the instruments. The exquisite engravings, china, bric-à-brac, and clocks in this room are such as make a collector envious; while an eighteenth-century occasional table and work-table appeal to the feminine heart which "loves" old and quaint furniture.

The writing-cabinet, a small room fitted with delightful furniture and bric-à-brac, and the other reception rooms of the house, are not less interesting. And when one comes at length to the bedrooms, it is to find realism even further advanced. In one room—that of a lady of the house—beside the bed stood a pair of high-heeled shoes just as the wearer might have slipped them off her feet ere getting into bed, a pair of silk stockings hanging on the foot of the bedstead, with petticoats and other articles of attire. In a

clothes-press are delightful gowns, such as an artist would feel inclined to appropriate to add to his stock of "property" costumes. The quaint toilet-table, with its polished mirrors, is laid out with toilet articles as though the occupant of the room had but just finished rouging and powdering. The fard-pots, brushes, combs, files, and scissors were all there ready for the morning as it seemed, when beauty aroused would consult her glass ere setting out, to enhance her charms or repair the ravages of time.

Near by was a severer room, that of the master of the house, whose riding-boots stood by the bedside, whose sword is hung over the back of a near-by chair by its belt, whose pistols are handy, and plum-coloured suit (perhaps this is changed now and then for another taken from the well-stocked wardrobe) was neatly folded and placed on another chair, or settle. The only thing needed to complete the illusion—the peruke was on its "block" and shaving implements on the dressing-table—was the head of the sleeper upon the pillow.

So from the kitchen—quaint with a delightful collection of brightly-gleaming pots and pans—to garret is the eighteenth century reproduced. All that is lacking is the human note of the people of that past age moving amid the charming setting which the skill and artistic sense of the originator of this wonderful museum has conjured up. And as one comes away from examining the interesting collection of prints, documents, tapestries, and garments which are displayed in several of the upper rooms, and slips a "pot de vin" into the hand of the grey-headed custodian, who proved a delightful guide over the house, one realizes the limitations of human intelligence and appreciation on over-hearing a young fellow-countrywoman say to her mother, as the two come out of the *salon* and prepare to ascend the staircase to the second floor: "It's all just lovely, mamma. Even Harrods' people couldn't do it better."

We don't think that they could. We wonder what our grey-headed custodian would say if the remark were translated and explained. We fancy he would lift up his hands in horror, and repeat again what he had already told us several times: "Monsieur, this collection was the work of a lifetime. There is none other so complete, so artistic, in Flanders."

For Harrods and their enterprise is, of course, unknown to this charming-mannered custodian of ancient Ypres.

There are yet many other things of interest in quaint, old-world Ypres—for example, the Hospice St. Jean, near the Porte de Lille, not forgetting the curious outdoor Calvary of the Church of St. Pierre, which one passes on the way to the Hospice, and the quaint figures in their wire netting protection within the church itself.

But the call of the road and the enticing voices of the spirits of other ancient towns which lie along our way to Namur lure one on, and Ypres is left reluctantly by the Porte de Menin.

The most direct route to Courtrai is by way of Menin, on the Lys. But there is not much of note to detain one in this once strongly fortified place, which is but a few miles distant from the French frontier formed by the bank of the Lys.

The approach to Courtrai is through a pleasant and fertile stretch of country, more undulating than is much of the road we have taken inland from Nieuport. As one crosses the Lys and ascends the main street which leads to the Grande Place, one catches a glimpse down the river of the picturesque twin towers known as “Broeltorens,” with the ancient bridge between them spanning the placid and almost currentless river.

It was market-day on the somewhat dull afternoon on which we reached Courtrai, and the wide Place was rendered less grey than it otherwise would have been by the presence of canopied booths, the fruit and flowers upon which gave a touch of bright colour here and there to the scene.

From the fourteenth-century Tours des Petits Halles the chimes rang out, more musical than some carillons we had heard on our journey, and we decided that the Hotel du Damiers on the Grande Place hard by might be risked. We had by now become shy of too near proximity with carillons until we had heard them chime.

There is an air of life and commercial activity about Courtrai even on a dull afternoon with a “drizzle” of rain threatening, a pleasant change from the sluggish, though interesting, life of Nieuport, Dixmude, and Ypres. We remembered that Courtrai was one of the towns of West



Flanders, which, famous and prosperous in the Middle Ages, had of recent times somewhat recovered itself from the decline which afflicted it and Ypres and other towns alike. Its 40,000 inhabitants must do something. As a matter of fact they deal in flax and manufacture linen. The flax of Courtrai, indeed, is famous the world over. Its table linen almost outrivals that of Belfast (which, by the way, purchases vast quantities of Courtrai flax), and its lace-makers are almost equally well known.

There is an air of solid prosperity about the houses of the town, situated in the streets lying parallel with the river, and between it and the sombre, though beautiful, Church of St. Martin, behind their discreetly curtained and shuttered windows, large fortunes are being made by means of flax, industry, and frugality of living.

"There are," said an Irish flax merchant with whom we chatted over our *café au lait* and rolls at breakfast on the morning after our arrival, "more than a score of merchants known to me who have amassed fortunes of a hundred thousand pounds and upwards. And yet you might suppose that they were not worth twenty. They live frugally, their wives and daughters work in the house—some of them keep a single servant—and even do the cooking."

"What a strange life!" we exclaimed, with recollections of people with four or five hundred a year in England who apparently can own expensive motors and entertain company.

"Not at all," replied our Belfast merchant. "That is the way to get rich and keep rich. A fortnight at Heyst, Knocke, Blankenberghe—seldom Ostend—an occasional tennis party, piano-playing, and church-going, make up with industry the amusements and life interests of the wives and daughters of Courtrai merchants. They are charming hostesses, as I know from experience, and make excellent wives, as several of my countrymen have found."

In the work of its womankind Belgium indeed has an asset of priceless value.

Beneath the very walls of picturesquely-situate Courtrai, just a little more than 600 years before—to be exact, on July 11, 1302—was fought the famous Battle of Spurs, which, if one may believe a famous schoolmaster, English boys think was so named because the French knights and



A CORNER OF COURT ROOM, WITH RENAISSANCE CHIMNEY-PIECE, COURTRAI





mounted troops engaged therein took flight. The real origin of the name, of course, arose from the immense number (some accounts mention 800) of golden spurs picked up upon the field after the battle, a golden spur being one of the distinguishing marks of French knight-hood. The battle was fought between the Flemish forces under the leadership of William, Duke of Juliers, and John, Count of Namur, and the French under the Comte D'Artois. The former consisted chiefly of the weavers of Bruges and Ypres, under the local leadership of the heads of the Bruges Guilds, Jan Breidel, and Pieter de Coninc. Some idea of the fierceness of the fighting may be gathered from the fact that no less than 1,200 knights and many thousand common soldiers were killed. The French were put to flight, and the golden spurs found upon the field and taken from the slain were hung as trophies in a monastery church since destroyed by fire.\*

The two chief churches, St. Martin's and Notre Dame, the former near the picturesque *béguinage*, are both of considerable interest. St. Martin's is a remarkable example of the blending of German with French methods of ecclesiastical architecture, and the result is impressive. The church is spacious and dignified, and the choir is a delightfully elegant one. The western end of the church, except for the beautiful portal, strikes one as being a little lacking in grace, and the details are not well and purely carried out, but this does not mar the building to any great extent. The earlier portions were commenced (possibly on the site of a much earlier church) during the closing decade of the fourteenth century. The transept was completed about 1410-1415, and the western portal in the last decade of the sixteenth century. The nave is divided from the aisles by tall, round columns, having narrow capitals and octagonal abaci. The inner faces of the columns are adorned with life-size statues. There is no clerestory, and in this feature the building resembles some well-known North-West Germany churches. The vaulting of the nave, aisles, and transepts is very simple and effective, and at the same height in each case. In the choir the French style, more graceful and of earlier date, prevails, and one finds a

\* Some authorities state that at a later date, when the French conquered Flanders, the spurs were removed by the victorious knights.

low triforium arcade and an elegant clerestory. The apse has three sides, and round them the arcade and clerestory are continued, but there is no ambulatory. There are two tiers of windows, a feature which recalls memories of Ratisbon Cathedral. The tracery in these windows, the lower ones of four lights, the upper rank of three, is very light and effective.

A notable feature of the choir are the graceful columns which support the five arches on either side of it, and those which, in its north aisle, open into the large apsidal chapel. The carving of the capitals of these columns, which are of cylindrical shape and of the same height as those of the nave, though considerably more elegant and slender in proportion, should be noted. It is by many authorities thought to be the best and most charming in character of any in Belgium. Many casual observers would place its date as in the twelfth century, although it is probably fourteenth; the foliage and interspersed crockets of the design giving an impression of the earlier century work.

Several bays of the choir are furnished with screens of Flemish Flamboyant work of a good type, harmonizing admirably with the beautiful and elegant late Gothic stone tabernacle, which stands in the centre of the third arch on the north side. There is a fine sixteenth-century carved wood pulpit with a handsome sounding board which, with the tabernacle of like date, was happily rescued from the destructive fire that greatly damaged the church in 1862. The stained glass of the choir and the large side chapel, though tasteful and good in colouring, is modern. The triple picture in the north transept, by B. de Ryckere, a sixteenth-century painter and a native of Courtrai, representing the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the Creation, and Baptism of Our Lord, is interesting.

The Church of Notre Dame, which unhappily was rather injudiciously modernized in the eighteenth century, was founded by Count Baldwin IX. of Flanders, and was completed about 1211. It can be easily seen from portions which have been untouched, that prior to the restoration and modernizing to which we have referred the building must have been a remarkably fine example of thirteenth-century architecture. Although the church, which is cruciform in shape, is short, and has only two bays to the nave,

the building out of chapels on the south and north sides has served to give it an appearance of much greater size. On the west gable of the first-named chapel is a bell turret which it will be observed groups very effectively with the steeples flanking the western façade. Among the most noticeable and interesting of the medieval features of the interior are the round columns of the apsidal choir, which have four small shafts grouped round them, with foliated capitals, the windows of the transept with their inner planes of tracery and four lights, the two lateral chapels, and some of the smaller details.

The church is rich in the possession of a masterpiece of Van Dyck—one of the best of his sacred paintings—"The Elevation of the Cross." By a strange coincidence this work of art, which had some little while before been cut out of its frame and stolen by two men named Carlier and Vesfaille, was about to be received back from the repairer's hand in Antwerp the week after the date of our last visit. The occasion was to be a most impressive one, consisting of a religious and civic procession, and a day of general rejoicing. The two thieves had got clear away with their booty, so the most genial librarian of the Hôtel de Ville told us, but were captured when near Bruges by the intelligence of a peasant, who saw them wheeling a roll of sacking on a barrow, which they were obviously anxious should not attract undue attention. The *gendarmérie* was notified, and the two men captured. In the roll was found the missing picture for which the hue and cry had been raised. The painting is now hung in the south transept.

To the right and left of the choir recess, in the ambulatory, are altars enriched with good marble reliefs dating from the eighteenth century. They are by Nicolas Lecreux, of Tournai, and represent Mary Magdalene with angels, and St. Rochus ministering to the plague-stricken.

In the panels of the trefoiled blank arches are some remarkable bas-reliefs, the subjects of which are the Seven Mortal Sins. These consist of a series of figures, many of them of a grotesque character, and some of so indelicate a nature that one is tempted to wonder how they came to be placed in such a building.

An extremely interesting feature of this chapel is a series of fourteenth-century wall-paintings, representing the Counts



and Countesses of Flanders down to that period, which M. Van der Plaetsen (who restored the frescoes about a quarter of a century ago), continued to the time of the Emperor Francis II. He also adorned the western wall of the chapel with a picture of the Last Judgment.

In the Gothic Town Hall, erected in the early part of the sixteenth century, situate on the north-west side of the Grande Place, Courtrai has a building of great architectural charm. It was greatly injured and much neglected during the eighteenth century, but has been well and carefully restored since the middle of the last century. The front has niches, containing statues of historical and other characters. On the ground-floor is the interesting *Salle Échevinale*, containing a very handsome Renaissance chimneypiece, adorned with coats-of-arms of the standard-bearers of knights of the town, a figure of the Virgin, and statues of the Archduke Albert of Austria and his wife, Clara Isabella Eugenia, daughter of Philip II. of Spain, and the coats-of-arms of the allied cities of Bruges and Ghent. On the walls above the oak-panelled dado are some well-painted and interesting frescoes by Gottfried Guffens, of Hasselt, and Jan P. Swerts, of Antwerp, representing scenes from the history of Flanders. These include: "The Departure of Count Baldwin IV. for the Fourth Crusade in 1202," a spirited painting of good colouring; and "The Flemish Leaders holding a Council of War" in the Court Room on the day before the Battle of Spurs a century later.

In the Council Chamber, which is on the first floor, is one of the most remarkable and perfect Flamboyant Flemish chimneypieces in Belgium. It is very richly carved, and dates from 1527. There are no less than three rows of beautifully and elaborately carved statuettes, representing the virtues and vices, and punishments of the latter. The little figures, of which there are generally several in the group, are astonishingly well executed; the upper row contains representations of liberality, chastity, humility, faith, patience, temperance, etc., among the virtues. In the second row or tier we have their counterparts—avarice, voluptuousness, pride, idolatry, anger, gluttony, etc. The reliefs in the third row are popularly supposed to represent the punishments which follow indulgence in the vices, and are certainly very vivid representations, which should serve as strong



THE BROELTORENS, COURTRAI





deterrents. The three statues placed upon corbels represent Charles V. with the Infanta Isabella of Spain on the right, and a figure of Justice on the left. The old plans of the town and suburbs, dating from 1641 and done in oils, which are on the walls of the chamber, are curious and interesting.

Along the Rue Guido Gezelle, or by way of the town bridge, and then along the left-hand bank of the river, one reaches the ancient bridge which connects the two fine towers, known as "Les Tours du Broel." They are one of the most interesting architectural survivals in Courtrai. At the time of a recent visit the bridge was under repair, and upon inquiry we ascertained that the "Vandals" of Courtrai had for some time been agitating for its removal, and the substitution of a "nice new iron bridge." Happily the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments came to the rescue, and chiefly by its efforts the danger of destruction of this old-world landmark, we were told, has at least for the time been averted. In the right-hand tower is housed the *Musée d'Antiquités*, containing, amongst other things, some fine and interesting specimens of Flanders lace, engravings, etc.

A walk along the left bank of the river takes one into the land of the flax industry, and one obtains a most picturesque backward view, ere turning the corner, of the massive old Tours du Broel and a silhouette of the distant town between them.

In the flax fields and linen bleaching-grounds one sees many a picture, such as Millet would have chosen to paint. Groups of men and women pursuing the industry which made Courtrai famous when the world was young and has, down from the Middle Ages to modern times, enabled her to hold her own in the world's linen markets, and to escape the fate of becoming (as have so many other ancient places in Flanders) a "dead" town.

## CHAPTER V

### TOURNAI AND THROUGH LE BORINAGE TO NAMUR

WAYFARERS who come to Courtrai are well advised to make the slight *détour* from the direct route on their way to Tournai, which will enable them to visit Oudenarde. All round Courtrai are scattered interesting and delectable towns and quaint villages, in which the artist and antiquarian may well linger; but Oudenarde is especially picturesque and historically interesting.

The best way (and it is a delightful road) to reach it, tramping or cycling, is, as we did, to take the road out of Courtrai to Avelghem, and thence go north-eastward along the banks of the winding Scheldt, in a bend of which the ancient town is placed. Nowadays Oudenarde, the birth-place of the famous Margaret of Parma, lives largely on its past glories; there are but some seven thousand souls where anciently there were tens of thousands. In those far-off days its chief industry was tapestry-making.

Although there are a couple of churches and several ancient buildings in Oudenarde well worth seeing, it is the beautiful Late Gothic *Hôtel de Ville* that forms the town's greatest architectural attraction. In this delightful building one easily traces the influence of its larger and more famous prototype at Brussels, which dates from about a century earlier. The architects of the Oudenarde *Hôtel de Ville* were William de Ronde and Hendrik van Peede, a native of the town, who became of some considerable note. The building was a few years ago thoroughly and sympathetically restored, without and within, and is now in an almost perfect state of preservation. The ground-floor forms a pointed hall, supported by columns, and there is an elegant arcade in the front of the buildings consisting of seven

arches. There are two upper stories beneath a high-pitched roof, broken up by picturesque mansard windows. The tower in the centre of the building is of a charming and rich design, and the chimes which hang in it are of an unusually pleasant and musical tone, with "the mellowness of old bells oft rung." The crown-shaped roof is surmounted by a figure known as "John the Warrior," who holds the banner of Flanders in his hand.

The *Salle des Pas Perdus*, on the first floor, is enriched by a very fine Late Gothic or Renaissance chimneypiece, distinguished by some excellent and elaborate undercut stone and metal work of Peter van Schelden, in the first half of the sixteenth century. The Council Chamber has a door and portal of most extraordinary richness of carving in the Renaissance style, which even the casual and unlearned sightseer can scarcely fail to admire, and also a fine Late Gothic chimneypiece from the same hands. The large room on the second floor contains a most interesting collection of books, coins, and antiquities, chiefly relating to the town. Not the least interesting among the many items is a fine series of manuscripts and autograph letters of Margaret of Parma, born in 1522, a natural daughter of the Emperor, Charles V., and Johanna van der Gheenst, who ultimately became the Regent of the Netherlands under Philip II.; Charles V.; Isabella Clara Eugenia; William of Nassau; Lamoral, Count Egmont; and last, though by no means least, of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough. The last named convey orders and instructions for the victualling of the army then under the command of himself and Prince Eugene of Savoy. Only a few days later, on July 11, 1708, the two Generals gained a brilliant victory over the French, which bears the name of the town under the walls of which it was fought.

We fancy that the importance and interest of the two churches of Oudenarde are generally undervalued by most, if not all, guide-books. The town itself, now one of those strange decayed places, once of historical, political, and ecclesiastical importance, of which there are so many in Flanders, clustering round magnificent churches or a wonderful Hôtel de Ville, was in the days of Jacob and Philip van Artevelde almost equal to Ypres and Ghent in commercial importance and renown. Its two churches of Notre



Dame de Pamele and Ste. Walburga are interesting to the student and important to the architect, as illustrating distinct periods of ecclesiastical architecture. That of the first named being an excellent example of the Pointed Style soon after it had been evolved from the Romanesque, about the commencement of the fourteenth century. The second is a blending of two distinct periods, and offers a strange but artistically picturesque whole.

The exterior of the Church of Notre Dame de Pamele is not, perhaps, to the unlearned or casual observer, beautiful; it is even severe. But it has abiding interest for the student, and for two widely divergent reasons. The first that it is a perfect example of the Early Pointed Style; the second because it was built from the design and plans of Arnould de Binche, the earliest known Belgian artist, who made architecture a study as a profession.

The church was commenced on March 14, 1235, and was completed four years later by Alix, widow of the founder Arnould, Seigneur of Oudenarde. Happily the church escaped the pulling down and rebuilding which it is said was contemplated in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, and with the exception of the extension of the northern transept and rebuilding of the south side of the nave in the Second Pointed Style, remains an unusually perfect example of an interesting architectural period.

There are several especially interesting features in this delightful church. In plan it consists of a nave of four bays. The latter also has a clerestory, and aisles are carried round the five-sided apse. At the intersection of the cross a short octagonal tower rises which is crowned by a somewhat squat spire of similar character. The western elevation is impressive, and above the doorway, the arch of which rises from coupled shafts, is a lofty, two-light window surmounted by a circle.

The clerestory of the apse with its single lancet window on each side should be noted; and the church seen from the north-east presents the severe appearance such as is associated with Cistercian buildings in general.

The interior of the church repays attentive study, and we think will surprise many who have been unimpressed by the comparatively plain exterior. The nave is divided from the aisles by short, rounded columns, with foliated capitals in

the *à crochet* style, and octagonal abaci from which spring four heavily moulded arches. In the clerestory it will be noticed that the triple lancets are set nearly flush with the wall itself, and the ribs of the vault spring from slender shafts which are corbelled off just above the string-course, which separates the pier arches from the triforium. To separate the choir from its aisles the same type of columns for the arcades is found. There are capitals to the shafts of the triforium arcades of the transepts and choir, and this gives an appearance of far greater elegance and richness to them. The niches are filled with good modern statuary.

It will be noticed that there is a strange mingling of stone and red brick in the groining of the church, the latter being used for that of the south aisle and its chapels. But the impression given is, nevertheless, harmonious and effective; the brick affording a quite pleasing contrast with the blue-grey general tone of the whole interior.

Some years ago the latter was much disfigured in places by paint and whitewash, which during the carefully and well carried out restoration was entirely removed, to the great benefit of the effect realized by this beautiful church.

"The stained glass is so good," was the exclamation of one artist when viewing it recently, "that it is not easy to realize that it is all modern." It is certainly of very high artistic and colour merit. Full-length figures of the saints form the subjects of the windows of the clerestory, the choir and apse. The treatment is archaic; but it harmonizes well with the *tout ensemble* of the building, as do the delightful triple lancets which illumine the aisles and processional path round the apse. In the pair of long three-light windows of the north transept there is some beautiful glass. The compartments have a canopied figure at the bottom, and the supervening space is enriched with simple pattern work.

The other church of Oudenarde, dedicated to Ste. Walburga, stands at the south-east corner of the Grande Place, and is partly in the Romanesque Style of the twelfth century, and partly in the style of the fourteenth and fifteenth century Gothic. It is an interesting building, which combines work of two very distinct architectural periods, but we have no space for a lengthy or detailed description.

It is supposed that a vast scheme of reconstruction was

contemplated, with the object of converting the church into a First Pointed building. The work was, however, abandoned, and the choir and eastern walls of the transepts were left in their original state.

As it stands with its grand and vast nave, and the unfinished transepts overshadowing the more modestly proportioned choir, it affords an almost unique and certainly wonderfully interesting object-lesson of the lines upon which the medieval architect proceeded when engaged upon the task of replacing a small and unimposing building with one of larger and more impressive dimensions.

Upon entering the interior the fine and even grand proportions of the nave, which has recently been well and carefully restored, at once strike one. Amongst other things, the stonework has been cleared of whitewash and stucco and the tracery (which had been removed from the windows) replaced. The impression of the interior of the church is decidedly cold and austere, owing to the windows having been temporarily filled with sheets of ground-glass instead of the small diamond, leaded panes of "cathedral" tinted glass, which is nowadays generally used prior to the insertion of stained glass.

A very pleasing feature of the interior is the continuation of the rather narrow aisles to the western limit of the tower, into which they emerge through arches of equal height with those of the nave, giving an appearance of much spaciousness and grandeur, and, as a whole, the church is intensely interesting.

The Hôtel de Ville and the two churches of Oudenarde do not by any means, however, exhaust the charm of the quaint little town which is picturesquely situated upon the banks of the Scheldt. There is much in it to please and interest the antiquarian, the artist, and the amateur photographer, who, indeed, form the greater number of the not very numerous visitors who find their way to the place made historically famous by one of Marlborough's notable victories. In the immediate neighbourhood, too, are many quaint villages and townlets well worth exploration, to mention which even by name there is no space in the present volume.

There are two delightful routes from Oudenarde by which ancient Tournai may be reached. One is back along the left bank of the river to Avelghem—which, of course, has



the disadvantage that one has travelled it before—and thence on to Pecq and Tournai. The other route does not touch the river at all, but runs through undulating and pretty country almost due south to quaint Renaix, and thence into less hilly country south-west, and then south again till Tournai is reached.

The city of Tournai is built on both banks of the Scheldt, and stands nearly a hundred feet above sea-level. It is not only one of the most ancient towns in Belgium, dating, as *Civitas Nerviorum*, from the time of Julius Cæsar, but was in the fifth century the capital of the Merovingian kings of the Salic Franks, who, during the third century, had established themselves in the hill-country of Belgium, and more particularly in the district between the river Meuse and the lower Rhine. The place was afterwards known as Turnacum (Doornik, Flem.), and in more modern times as Tournai. Nowadays it is a flourishing town—as ancient towns in Flanders and Hainault go—of 40,000 inhabitants.

One of the most romantic of its many sieges is commemorated in the fine monument in the Grande Place to Marie de Lalaing, Princesse d'Épinoy, who defended the town with astonishing courage and skill against the forces of Alexander, Duke of Parma, in 1581. The statue was cast from a model by Dutrieux, and is an impressive and excellent piece of work. In 1709 the forces under the command of the Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene took it, but in 1745 it once more fell into the hands of the French, and three years later, at the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, was made a part of the Netherlands.

The entry to Tournai from the direction of Courtrai is delightful. A fine avenue of large and well-grown trees leads one almost into the centre of the town itself; and even the quays, like several of those in Bruges and Ghent, are tree-planted, and their picturesqueness thereby considerably enhanced. Although many coal-barges from Le Borinage crowd the river on their way to other parts of Belgium, Tournai is sure to strike the traveller as being distinguished for a cleanliness and picturesqueness considerably greater than that of most Belgian commercial towns. The old walls which served the town so well long ago in times of siege are nowadays laid out as promenades. Unfortunately (as is the case at Ghent) modern improvements of recent years

have resulted in the levelling down of some of the most picturesque portions of the fortifications, and the modern scheme of improving and widening the outer line of quays has robbed them of some of their former quaintness and beauty.

In ancient times the town, which was the birthplace of the pretender Perkin Warbeck, had a great trade in copper and brass work, and towards the close of the seventeenth century, and onwards for a period of about a hundred and fifty years, it was noted for its tapestry looms, faience and porcelain manufactories, the latter started by the well-known F. J. Peterinck in 1751. The chief modern industries are weaving and embroidering. But there are not a large number of big factories, as the weavers work a great deal in their own homes, and are well worth seeing. On the outskirts of Tournai, in quite a number of cottages, small hand-looms are found, and weaving is carried on amidst decidedly arcadian and often picturesque surroundings.

There is a distinctly prosperous air about this delightful old town, which, however modern in some of its ways, has yet hanging about it the charm of ancient things, and memories of romantic and stirring events. How far it is removed from intimate communion with outside things is best understood when one records that not an English paper was to be found in any of the newspaper shops or "libraries" at the time of our recent visit. No, not even the Paris edition of the *New York Herald* or *Daily Mail*.

We were told, with an engaging smile, by the bright little *garçon* of a somewhat tumbledown hotel on the Grande Place at which we put up, that he, if no one else, could get us *un journal Anglais*. Having searched the town fruitlessly ourselves, we smiled, but in the end trusted him with a franc.

The little *garçon* left us on his voyage of discovery. He disappeared through the glass swing-door of the restaurant, and sped across the sunlit Grande Place. We went on with our lunch, and waited for the *journal Anglais* to materialize. At last the door once more swung back, and our now breathless *garçon*, a still broader smile illuminating his chubby countenance, reappeared. He advanced towards us with the precious *journal Anglais*—was it the *New York Herald* or the *Daily Mail*? we speculated—carefully concealed behind his back.



ROOD-LOFT, TOURNAI CATHEDRAL





At last he stood beside us.

With a bow and a sweeping gesture of his hand, and a triumphantly ejaculated “Voilà, messieurs, le journal Anglais,” a paper—or, rather, a magazine—was placed upon the table with the change, ten centimes.

It was not the *Daily Mail*—it was not even the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*. This a glance assured us. We turned it over to see what *journal Anglais* the resources of Tournai had at last produced.

It was a copy of *Weldon's Ladies' Journal* for the previous month.

The expression on our faces must have distressed Georges much. Indeed, he seemed quite crestfallen, and when we explained that it was news concerning *le cricket* and *le sport* that we desired, not that concerning *la mode* and *la lingerie feminine*, he heaved a sigh, and explained that Monsieur le Propriétaire de la Librairie Universelle had assured him that what he had brought us with such splendid dramatic effect was *un journal très bien connu*. Perhaps it is.

Tournai has many attractions in the way of fine and interesting churches and historic and ancient buildings. Around its irregularly shaped, but, on the whole, triangular Grande Place, are grouped the fine Early Gothic Church of St. Quentin, which is so pleasing and famous as to be known as “La Petite Cathédrale,” the Cloth Hall, and the Belfry, which is thought to date from the latter end of the twelfth century, whilst near by is the Cathedral of Notre Dame, a magnificent example of eleventh-century architecture.

Many, indeed, consider that this wonderful Church of Notre Dame is the finest and most architecturally satisfying in Belgium, not even excepting those of Malines, Bruges, and Antwerp. But the mere fact that Tournai is off the direct route from Ostend to Brussels has served to ensure it a neglect by those who wish to see what is best worth while, which is astonishing when one considers that the town is easily reached from Namur, for example, to which so many go to visit the beautiful valley of the Meuse.

That Notre Dame of Tournai is at first sight one of the most beautiful and impressive of all the cathedrals of Belgium few will controvert. The charm and grandeur it possesses arises not alone from its fine central tower, but also from

the four rather singularly placed and elegant lateral steeples, the extraordinary extent of its Romanesque nave and apsidal transepts, and the grand proportions of its choir of the Middle Pointed periods. It is situate upon rising ground on the southern bank of the Scheldt Canal, which divides the city into two halves. On the right is the old Faubourg Saint Brice, where stood the original settlement or Gallic *Durnacum*, with the ancient palace of the Frankish kings, and where, in the middle of the seventeenth century, was found the tomb of Chilperic and its treasures.

St. Eleutherius, who probably built a church on the site of an earlier one, was born at Tournai in the year 456, and embraced the faith of his parents. A persecution of the Christians in the city and district round about caused him to flee with many others to Blandinium (Blandain?), where after a time a church was founded. On the death of the first Bishop of Blandinium, Eleutherius was sent on a mission to Rome by his fellow-Christians to obtain the then Pope's sanction to his succeeding Theodorus, who had died. As a result of this journey, apparently, he was consecrated to the See in or about 487. After a period of nine years, the conversion of Clovis and his followers permitted Eleutherius to return to his native town. He became Bishop of Tournai, and occupied the See for a period of upwards of forty years. Most of these were spent in a constant struggle against the pagans and heretics belonging to Arian sects, whose doctrines in the early years of Christianity in Gaul greatly influenced all the inhabitants save the Franks. Even Eleutherius did not escape persecution, and eventually suffered martyrdom. In the year 531 his chief persecutors and the opponents of the Christian faith lay in wait for him as he left one of the churches of his diocese, and so beat and ill-treated him that seven weeks later he died of his injuries. He was buried at Blandinium, but his remains were afterwards removed to Tournai, where they now rest in a beautiful, though badly placed, Early Gothic shrine on one side of the high altar in the choir.

The church had many benefactors in the centuries which immediately followed the time of St. Eleutherius. King Chilperic endowed it generously, and until the middle of the sixteenth century the original deed of gift, with his signature, was preserved among the archives of the chapter.



This was, unfortunately, burnt with many other valuable and interesting medieval deeds and documents in the fire of 1566. With the invasion of the Normans in 882 and following years the people of Belgium fled in all directions, and the land was wasted with fire and sword. Tournai was far too rich and notable a place to escape. The fortifications and chief buildings were destroyed and burned, and the inhabitants were compelled to abandon the city, to which for more than a century they did not return.

There seems little doubt but that the cathedral was pillaged and, in part, at least, destroyed. There is good reason for believing that its rebuilding and restoration was not commenced until well into the eleventh century. At various times there have been fierce controversies regarding the age of the oldest portion of the church, but by most authorities it is not considered likely that the nave, the oldest portion of the present building, can have been even commenced prior to the middle of the eleventh century. One authority, who has devoted a large amount of research to enable the question to be decided,\* quoted in his work a manuscript of the middle of the sixteenth century (discovered about sixty-five years ago), which, giving a list of the festivals of the cathedral, places the date of the dedication of the church as May 9, 1066, in the following words :

*“Dedicatio ecclesiæ est festivus dies in populo intra muros. Triplex est cum octavâ et duplex primæ classis. Videliscet novæ, anno 1066.”*

Very great damage was done to this beautiful church during the eighteenth century by careless attempts to uphold the building. In the transepts and triforia of the choir a large number of openings were bricked up, many of the windows were deprived of their tracery, and whitewash was applied in so reckless a manner as to cover up the capitals of columns and other details. At this time there were a large number of ancient frescoes adorning the walls, and these were also covered over. The present semi-circular groined roof of the nave was substituted for the original flat wooden one.

The Cathedral had unfortunately long before suffered from even more violent injury during the week in August, 1566,

\* *“Recherches sur l'Histoire de l'Eglise cathedrale de Notre Dame de Tournai.”* Par L. d'Anstaign, 1842.

when the iconoclasts committed their depredations and destructions in the Netherlands. The medieval decorations and furniture of the church were removed, and other spoliation accomplished. And just a little more than a century and a quarter later, in 1794, when the French Revolutionary troops overran the land, it was deprived of its revenues and of many objects of its treasury; whilst its sculpture and stained glass, with few exceptions (with the notable one of the seven beautiful windows in the southern transept recording the munificence of Chilperic), were defaced or destroyed.

One of the best points whence to study the elevation of the nave, which is of great interest, is from the south, where its distinguishing features—three tiers of round-headed windows—can be seen, one lighting the clerestory, another the triforium, and the third and lowest the aisle.

The towers, four in number, flanking the transepts, are of very graceful proportions. The fact that the details of the enrichment varies may be taken to indicate that they were built at different periods. They all have quadrangular spires, and the central tower is square with a short octangular spire. The influence of German architecture is very striking in this portion of the church, although there is withal a great independence of feeling shown. From the south-west corner of the Square the group of five spires and the environment gives to the church an appearance of impressiveness and dignity, which cannot fail to be noted with delight by even the most unlearned observer. Formerly an additional pair of towers flanked the eastern apse, and at that period the effect must have indeed been beautiful.

Although the choir of this Cathedral, to many experts and to amateurs generally, presents a most complete and interesting example of Gothic architecture, it has its critics, some of whom, including Louis Gonse, in his well-known work, "*L'Art Gothique*," published some twenty years ago, refers to it in a very disparaging manner. M. Gonse contends that the architect of Tournai choir must have been inexperienced, and had made but a superficial and unsatisfactory study of such cathedrals and churches as those of Amiens, Beauvais, and St. Quentin, which he calls "*les types picards de son voisinage*."

But whatever the disparagers of Tournai Cathedral, and

its wonderfully impressive choir in particular, may say, to the ordinary visitor, and even to the student, it remains one of the finest buildings of the period in Belgium. Another writer of discrimination\* is almost equally severe in his criticism of the choir, though bestowing warm praise both upon the fine Romanesque nave and the Transitional transepts; whilst noting the considerable beauty as regards proportion which the choir undoubtedly possesses, he goes on to remark that the general effect is "frail and weak in the extreme."

Some idea of the unusual loftiness of this portion of the Cathedral may be gained when it is remembered that its roof outside is on a level with the summit of the central tower.

One of the most interesting features of the exterior of the Cathedral to most people will undoubtedly be the extremely curious sculptures found on the outside of the north and south doorways. They are comprised in a blank semi-circular arch above the first-named door, which is enclosed in another arch formed by the three curves, in shape like a trefoil. The central curve of the latter being higher than the other two is formed by two curves, which, as they meet in a point, produce the true ogee. The jambs beneath these are also richly carved. In his excellent work,† Monsieur de Renaud has fully described the different sculptures, his contention being that the general subjects of these works represent, under many satirical and grotesque forms, the Norman destroyers of Tournai.

Among the many sculptures found on the jambs of the north doorway is seen a representation of the devil carrying off a man who is dressed in embroidered vestments, has a bag hanging round his neck, and is wearing a helmet. The man is seated astride the devil's neck, and holds on to his horns, his legs appearing to the front of the strange supporter, who clasps them with one hand, whilst with the other he gives his own tail a twist.

Seen above this is an angel, and below it is the coiled serpent so often found in Romanesque work, and of very obvious meaning.

Unfortunately, the sculptures which are seen on the flat

\* Fergusson, in his "Handbook of Gothic Architecture."

† "Monographie de la Cathedrale de Tournai."



of the doorway, enclosed by the jambs and the architrave, are so defaced as to be now unrecognizable.

At the sides there are some other subjects, among them a reconciliation, where a king is seen joining the hands of two people; whilst the uppermost carving depicts a town gate—possibly that of Tournai—set between lofty walls, and half-open. A man is seen entering the gate bearing a load on his shoulders, and Monsieur de Renaud and other authorities think that this is intended to suggest the return of the people to Tournai after the departure of the Norman marauders.

On another panel a man is shown cutting off the head of a soldier with a big sword. This subject has been the matter of much dispute, some favouring the idea that it is Scriptural, and a representation of the incident of David and Goliath, whilst others incline to the view that it is merely a representation of an execution.

The outer mouldings of the architrave have grotesque and also symbolical figures carved upon them.

The cap of one of the side-shafts is very finely carved in a grotesque, representing a seated, beaked, and winged monster, presumed to be the spirit of evil, and quite Assyrian in character.

The exterior band of mouldings comprise palmettes, masks, and griffins. Some writers have been accustomed to describe these carvings as barbarous and rough, but to do so is to entirely overlook the intention and the astonishing decorative skill of their producers of long ago. It would be difficult to find examples of similar sculptures which excel them in the spirit and precision of their workmanship, or the grotesque excellence and forcefulness of the ideas which are portrayed.

The sculptures of the south doorway resemble the above in general character, but they are much less varied, and would appear to have been restored. They chiefly comprise figures of armed men who guard the entrance of the church, one of these threatening intruders with a sword.

The figures on the jambs of these doors are evidently allegorical, and one sees beneath the figure of a knight the word *superbia* and beneath that of a woman bearing a cross the word *pietas*.

Of these sculptures generally, Monsieur de Caumont says:

"At all periods imagination has been one of the chief elements of art, and one must therefore not be astonished if one finds in the ornamentation of the Middle Ages conventional figures like one has also found in the architecture of Greece and in the architecture of Rome."

Upon entering the building one cannot fail to be impressed with a sense of its grandeur. The severe and solid-looking Romanesque nave contrasting with remarkable effect with the Gothic choir, and Transitional transepts.

The choir presents, indeed, a great contrast to the severity of the nave. Here one has an astonishing access of light, with windows filled with stained glass, separated from one another only by slender piers, and mullions of rod-like tenuity. The triforium is most elegant, and contrasts sharply with the vast and somewhat dim gallery of the nave, and large clerestories take the place of the dim arcades surmounting the gallery of the latter, and the aisles below it. The western half of the building is most impressive in its grandeur, there is little ornament. The choir, on the other hand, arouses one's keenest interest by its lightness, and the audacity (which Fergusson especially notes) of its builder, who gave to it such fairy-like piers, bent in two curves, one inwards and the other outwards, seemingly scarcely sufficient in strength to support the roof.

In place of the broad and stilted semicircular arches resting on massive piers to form an arcade dividing the nave from the aisles, in the choir we have sharply pointed and richly moulded lancets, supported upon square piers of extreme slenderness, at the angles of which very slim shafts are placed, whilst reed-like triple vaulting shafts reach from the roof to the floor. The nave isles are but dimly lighted by the windows, which are placed high up in the wall. The choir aisles, on the contrary, are illuminated by huge glazed spaces (they in a measure scarcely appear at first sight as windows), which seem hardly divided by the narrow buttresses. Of walls proper there are none. There are five trigonal chapels radiating from the eastern end, lighted in the same way, and being open to the choir, aisle or chevet, they give an unusual appearance to this part of the building.

The stained glass here, though for the most part quite

modern, has been designed with unusual taste and skill. The subjects of the windows are taken from the lives of Childeric and Sigebert, such as the giving of privileges to the Cathedral, incidents in the history of the diocese, and with the lives of St. Piat and Eleutherius. The most ancient portions of the stained glass were the work of Theodore Stueurbout, of Haarlem, who was a follower of the Bruges school of painters, and was possibly a pupil of the great Hans Memlinc himself.

Another feature of this church which will at once strike the intelligent observer is the immense gallery, which is of the same extent as the nave aisles. It is not an uncommon feature of Romanesque buildings, and very possibly arose from the vast passages which were appropriated to the use of women in Byzantine churches. In our own Abbey church of Westminster, which was formerly used by the nuns of the sister convent at Barking, the gallery is of somewhat similar character, and is of almost the same size as the aisles beneath it. It is screened off from view from below by the double shafts and beautiful tracery. Norwich Cathedral (to mention only one other) has a similar feature, though of a much less imposing size.

From the western doors at Tournai one obtains a very impressive vista of the interior of the cathedral. And one is at once conscious that much of its charm arises in no small measure from the skilful way in which the effect of light and shade has been brought about by the use of stained glass in the choir. This is in some measure crude, but is effective as a whole; so that when looking along the dimly lighted nave the eye takes in the eastern portion of the building, which even on a bright summer's day, as when last we saw it, is filled with ambient and subdued light, which spreads out behind the eighteenth-century group of St. Michael in combat with the Evil One, by Nicolas Lecreux, a native of the town, which in dark bronze rises above the screen, and materially assists in the pleasing and even impressive effect of the whole.

The Early Renaissance screen which crosses the entrance to the choir, and projects into the space beneath the lantern, is the work of Corneille de Vriendt, and is one of the most graceful of its kind, and is in marble of various colours.

There are several details of the choir which are by no



means worthy of it. Among them the high altar, formerly in the Church of St. Martin, which, although made of costly materials, is poor in design, and lacking in dignity for the position it occupies; and the bishop's throne, stalls, and the screens which fill in the arches of the choir are not good enough for it.

Amongst the pictures and treasures of the church worth noting are the painting on the wall of one of the chapels in the ambulatory, representing "The Triumph of Death," a very favourite thirteenth-century subject; the large picture by Rubens in the first chapel, commencing on the right side of the rood loft, the subject of which is "The Rescue of Souls from Purgatory," an imposing composition, which, however, bears traces of having been rather recklessly retouched. In the Chapel of St. Louis—the first of the south right aisle—is a Jordaens: "The Crucifixion." And in the fourth chapel of the ambulatory a "Christ Healing the Blind," an early work of Louis Gallait, a native of Tournai. In the next chapel is an interesting series of pictures: "Scenes from the Life of the Virgin Mary," by Lancelot Blondeel, a sixteenth-century painter and architect of Bruges.

To the right of the high altar is the shrine of the Virgin, or *Châsse de Notre Dame*, a fine early thirteenth-century work in painted and gilded wood by Nicholas de Verdun, with scenes from the life of Christ in bas-reliefs and medallions. On the other side of the sanctuary is the famous shrine or reliquary of St. Eleutherius, also late Romanesque, and dating probably a quarter of a century later than that of the Virgin. This *châsse* is an exceedingly beautiful example of the goldsmith's art of the period. It is of silver gilt, adorned on the sides with seated figures of the Apostles under tabernacle work. There are four figures on each side, and at the ends are those of Christ and the Saint himself. The gable above the last named contains wingless angels, bearing the symbols of his martyrdom. St. Eleutherius is seen holding a model of the cathedral, such as is always given to founders, and is standing upon a two-headed monster, representing heresy and persecution.

The Treasury of the Cathedral contains a fine and most interesting collection of ancient robes. Among them is a chasuble, traditionally supposed to have been given to the

cathedral by Thomas à Becket, who visited Tournai in 1165. The Cathedral at Sens also possesses a chasuble, ornamented with the mitre of this archbishop. And a mitre (once at Sens) of à Becket ultimately came into the possession of the late Cardinal Wiseman. There is also an altar frontal of white silk, of great interest, embroidered with a tree of Jesse. The figures are well done, and are wrought in high relief, with the stiff conventionally conceived arms of the tree embracing the figure. The effect is striking. There is a piece of tapestry, the work of Pietro Feré, of Arras, dating from the year 1402, representing the Plague at Tournai and some scenes from the history of the city's patron saints. There is also a fine fourteenth-century psalter, and an ivory diptych dating from the eleventh. Not the least interesting item of the collection is the mantle, embroidered with subjects from the Passion and the Last Supper, which Charles V. wore when at Tournai, holding a chapter of the Golden Fleece.\* There is also a beautiful ivory crucifix† attributed to Jerome Duquesnoy, who lived in the first half of the seventeenth century.

The three other churches of Tournai—St. Quentin, St. Nicholas, and St. Jacques—all of them form interesting examples of the bold though rather coarse Early Pointed style of architecture, which so much prevailed in this district of Belgium in the thirteenth century. The towers of the two latter are very graceful, and the churches—chiefly First Pointed—have several features in common. Perhaps the most readily remarked is that the clerestory with its lancet windows is set behind a continuous arcade.

\* The Military Order, instituted by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, at his marriage in 1429, and known as the "Toison d'or," or "Golden Fleece." It was said to have been founded on account of the profit Philip made from wool. The number of knights was thirty-one. They wore a scarlet cloak lined with ermine, with the collar open, and the Duke's cipher in the form of a B, to signify Burgundy, together with flints striking fire with the motto, *Ante ferit, quam flamma micat*. At the end of the collar depended a golden fleece, with the device *Pretium non vile laborum*.

The Order afterwards became common to all the princes of the House of Austria as descendants of Mary, daughter of Charles the Bold, last Duke of Burgundy, who had married Maximilian of Austria in 1477. The Order now belongs to both Austria and Spain in conformity with a treaty made on April 30, 1725. The present King of England and other royal princes are knights.

† By some the crucifix is thought to be by Fiamingo, the famous Flemish sculptor.



DOOR OF THE CATHEDRAL. TOURNAI





St. Jacques is chiefly in the lancet phase of the First Pointed style, but the chancel (apparently rebuilt somewhere about the fourteenth century), has an aisleless apse of German type. The spire is a well-proportioned one, springing from the tower at the western end of the nave, which has open turrets with pinnacles at each angle. Among the chief features of the interior are the tall rounded columns which support the arches of the nave. They have bell-shaped capitals, which are carved with a bold foliated design. The *raison d'être* of the arch which is thrown across the nave at its juncture with the transepts is somewhat obscure, as there is no central tower, but the feature is on the whole a pleasing one, and, at all events, tends to increase the apparent length of the nave, which, without the interposition of the arch, would appear rather disproportioned as regards length when compared with its height.

The church has been restored in recent years by Bryenne, the work being of a thorough, sympathetic, and intelligent character; and there is much modern stained glass in its windows, mostly of a good character. There are also some notable tombs, among the most interesting and important a Gothic one of Nicholas d'Avesnes.

The Church of St. Quentin, on the north-west side of the Grande Place, suffers considerably from being built in among houses. It is a quite small but picturesque building with a Modern Pointed eastern façade masking a Romanesque aisleless nave, into the transepts of which have been introduced at their angles four semi-circular chapels.

The roof of the body of the church is rather low, with the arches very broad and obtusely pointed; the roof of the transept being lower than the nave, which last is now flat whatever it may have originally been, that of the chancel and transept is ribbed; the ribs of the crossing resting upon banded vaulting shafts, which is a very uncommon feature in Belgium, where, indeed, bands are seldom seen.

The church was originally founded by St. Eloi (Eligius), the friend of King Dagobert, who was Bishop of Tournai and Noyon. Eloi did more than anyone else towards the dissemination of Christianity in Flanders. Tournai, however, was pagan, and his efforts at first met with small

success, but not discouraged, in addition to the Church of St. Quentin he founded the great and famous Abbey of St. Martin, the site of which was, some three-quarters of a century ago, converted into a park and public gardens. A few traces of the Romanesque pillars of the crypt are still to be seen.

At the death of the saint at Noyon on December 1, 659, the Queen of Clovis II. (originally a slave girl from Britain, but eventually canonized as St. Bathildis), came from Paris, and "shed floods of tears over the holy man's corpse, which she would fain have removed to Chelles, had the people of Noyon permitted it to go." Bathildis, who (possibly from her own experiences as a slave) was always, we are told, tender-hearted to the poor and oppressed, had given all her jewels, except a pair of bracelets, to the poor, had a cross made of these and placed it at the head of the saint's monument, covering it with a canopy of cloth of gold. The saint, originally a blacksmith, afterwards became a goldsmith, and wrought many shrines, among the most noted that of St. Martin at Tours. The so-called "Chair of Dagobert," for a long time attributed to him—which Napoleon used as a throne, and from which he distributed the honours to the army of invasion assembled at Boulogne—has since been discovered to be only an antique curule chair with an eleventh-century back.

With reference to the saint's work as a blacksmith there is an amusing tradition. It is said that one day a horse was brought to him possessed of an evil spirit or the devil, which caused the animal to kick most terribly. The saint, not to be deterred from his task, adopted the delightfully simple and original expedient of cutting off the horse's leg, placing it on the anvil, and when the shoe was properly fixed (the story goes) he made the sign of the cross, and not only fixed on the leg again to the horse quite comfortably, but also drove out the devil!

The Church of St. Brice is on the eastern side of the river, and is best reached from the Cathedral by the Place St. Pierre, Rue des Puits de l'Eau, and Rue de Pont. It is an interesting Early Gothic building dating from the twelfth century, but sadly disfigured by clumsy additions and alterations in the pseudo-Italian style. The great interest of this church to most tourists is the fact that near the north door



in May, 1653, (some authorities give the date as 1665) whilst digging in the foundations of a house then just pulled down, the workmen came upon an ancient burial-place about six feet below the surface. Upon opening it, two men's skulls were found, some bones, and the teeth and jaw-bone of a horse, also a horseshoe in a good state of preservation. About a couple of yards distant from these remains, whilst digging further they found a great number (upwards of three hundred it is said) of golden bees; a gold clasp with a head of Childeric in relief; a leather bag, which was broken open and disclosed more than a hundred gold medals, and two hundred silver ones; part of a sword, a javelin, and the iron of an axe; a small enamelled gold head of a bull; a ball of crystal, a gold case with a stylus for writing, a gold ring of large size, ornaments in the same metal from a sword and scabbard; ditto of harness for a horse, and other ornaments and articles. The most important discovery, however, was the large gold ring bearing a seal, upon which was engraved a man's figure surrounded by the lettering CHILDERICI REGIS. This identified the remains with those of Childeric. One of the skulls is supposed to have been that of the marshal of the Frankish king.

Thus in the endeavour to do some justice to the church of a saint, and in clearing away rotten tenements from the propinquity of it, the long-lost grave of the great Childeric was opened to the light of day. Since he had been buried not only had many generations lived and died above his resting-place, but almost as many royal houses and dynasties had come and gone. The Merovingian, Carolingian, Capetian, Valois, Orleans and Angoulême had all passed away; and the house of Bourbon itself—which claimed to have some of his blood in its veins—had come to a strange pass, kings and emperors—Chlotaire, Sigebert, Chilperic, Fredegonda, Pepin, Charlemagne, the Counts of Flanders and Counts of Hainault, many English kings—had all come and gone whilst the remains of Childeric lay unmarked and unhonoured in the darkness.

Most of the treasures found in Childeric's tomb were carried off to Paris in 1664; and many of them were stolen from the Bibliothèque Nationale in the year 1831. Amongst the number were the three hundred golden bees with which it is thought Childeric's royal robes were decorated. It was

these emblems that Napoleon the Great used for ornaments in preference to the fleurs-de-lis of France as the insignia of imperial dignity on the occasion of his coronation.

Among the other interesting buildings and spots in this ancient town, in which the student would fain linger, and seek in some measure to re-create the pageantry and romance of its past history, is the former Cloth Hall, now in part a Municipal Museum and Picture Gallery. The building is an interesting Renaissance structure dating from the first decade of the seventeenth century. It was carefully restored about thirty years ago.

The *salon* on the first floor contains a large number of pictures both ancient and modern of varying merit. Many are those of artists of the Tournai school. There is a fine and dramatic picture, which serves an excellent purpose in re-creating a famous episode in the history of the city in the picture of "The Defence of Tournai by the Princesse D'Epinoÿ" by Van Severdonck. We also noticed an interesting painting by Louis Galliat, pupil of Hennequin, "The Guilds of Brussels paying the Last Honours to the Bodies of Counts Egmont and Hoorn."

In the Galleries are some remarkable antiquities, including fourteenth-century ivories; one a "Coronation of the Virgin." But to many like ourselves probably the case containing manuscripts and miniatures amongst which we noted a psalter once belonging to Henry VIII. of England; a "Book of the Hours" dating from the later end of the thirteenth century, and a fourteenth-century copy of "Le Roman de la Rose," will prove of the greatest interest. The fifteenth-century cope of Bishop Guillaume Filastre, of Tournai, should also be noted.

There are still in Tournai some good examples of medieval architecture to reward the searcher in the by-ways. In the Rue de Paris, near the Belfry, is an excellent example of the domestic architecture of this period; and in the Rue des Meaux still stands the Grange de l'Abbaye St. Martin, dating from 1633, nowadays converted to the use of a café.

Of the ancient walls and ramparts much has disappeared during the last few years, and quite a considerable amount we found since a former visit of but a few years ago. Even the old Pont des Troues, so massive and picturesque, so full

of historic interest, and valuable as a relic of architecture, is threatened, and may, even before these words appear in print, be removed.

One leaves clean, picturesque, and, to all appearances, prosperous, Tournai with regret, not unmindful, perhaps, that before us lies the Belgian "Black Country," known as "Le Borinage," where three-fourths of the 130,000 souls who "live both on the earth and in the earth, delving amid the black deposits of vast primeval forests," dwell.

The road out of Tournai towards Mons is pleasant and picturesque to Antoign and Peruwelz, after which one gradually enters the grim and dusty Borinage. From Antoign to Fontenoy—the scene on May 11, 1745, of Marshal Saxe's sanguinary victory over the Allied Forces commanded by the Duke of Cumberland—is but a divergence of three or four miles, and is quite worth making. Close to Fontenoy is the fine old Gothic château of the Princesse de Ligne, full of delightful old-fashioned furniture, tapestry, carving, pictures, and curios.

Assuming, however, that the road from Antoign direct to Peruwelz is taken, a very pleasant route is by the tree-shaded towpath of the river, along which picturesque and gaily-painted barges, laden with hay, market produce, or wood, come and go, drawn by Flemish horses whose strength seems extraordinary; or grimy lighters filled with the produce of the "Borinage"—black coal, which strikes one as rather lustreless and dusty, unlike the "Derby Brights" and Welsh hard steam coal, or anthracite of Britain.

Then the way, whether by road or rail, becomes less picturesque, though not without that element of interest which always attaches to scenery indicative of strenuous toil. As one advances towards Mons, past an occasional field green with weeds as often as with grass; past vistas of huge chimney-stacks, the networks of aerial tramways of the mines, and, most curious and impressive of all, vast mounds and pyramids of slag—hundreds of thousands of tons in some of them—the beginnings of which no man now living could remember. Here, amid these mountains of shale, one realizes for the first time on the journey the meaning and aspect of industrial Belgium. Except for the absence of the clarity of Egyptian atmosphere, one can well imagine, as the sun sinks red behind them, and the sky takes on, first



a golden yellow, and then a purple, as of Egypt itself, that one was looking upon the Pyramids.

This district, it has been truly said, constitutes one of the most remarkable centres of the national life of Belgium. Not to have seen it is to have missed an essential part, which must weigh in any estimate one may form of the Belgian race and its industries.

The growth of coal-mining during the last half-century has been phenomenal. Fifty years or so ago, the output from the mines of the "Borinage" district was not much more than two million tons per annum; nowadays that has been multiplied at least by ten. The mines are almost, without exception, worked by joint-stock companies, or, as they are called in Belgium, *Sociétés Anonymes*. At the outset of the coal industry, the State, for the purpose of encouraging the getting of the mineral, waived its claim to royalties and dues, and there are none payable in Belgium to landowners. But it is generally thought that, with the discovery of any new coal-fields, the Government may put a tax on the coal raised from them, or arrange some other system of royalties. It thus came about that the small body of capitalists who got possession of the great coal-fields of the "Borinage" in Hainault have been enabled to work and exploit the same at comparatively little cost and at great profit to themselves. The original owners, however, have, in many cases, got rid of their interests at huge premiums by means of sale of their shares when the richness of the fields had been demonstrated. In the early days of coal-mining—and, indeed, until more recent times, when labour became organized—the Belgian miner worked twelve and fourteen hours a day underground for a wage of less than a pound a week. The effect of this almost unremitting, arduous, and unhealthy toil has been the production of a race dwarf-like in stature, some of the men being considerably below five feet in height, with the women and children shorter still. This strange and weird type, which chiefly comes of the third and fourth generation of miners, is particularly noticeable at such places as Frameries and other towns, where mining has been in existence for a century or more.

Capital managed to control the mining labour market and the mining industry for so long in Belgium that, until quite recent years, the Belgian miner had a harder battle to

fight than any other to secure proper and even humane treatment. This state of things could not have continued as long as it did but for the fact that the Belgian miner was willing and accustomed to maintain himself on so extremely slender a wage. The standard of living and comfort was low almost beyond belief; the education of miners' children almost entirely neglected, and a brutalizing of the type could only result.

In Hainault the majority of even the present generation of miners are illiterate, and this state of things will not be remedied until the State not only makes education compulsory, but places wise and stringent restrictions upon the employment of child labour in connection with the mines. The mere non-employment underground can afford no real remedy.

A visit to the "Borinage"—even a passage through it—is no pleasant experience. The standard of morality is low; the physical condition of the people is lamentable. There are no resorts, nor clubs, for the miners save the *cercles* of the Socialists, the *estaminet*, the *cabaret*. And at the two last named, men, women, and children often see and hear what is degrading, and indulge to excess in the drinking of *faro* (a kind of beer), or worse, *genièvre*, or gin. An even more virulent spirit, which is very popular with the miners, is *schnick*, which is sold at the rate of a large wine-glassful for ten centimes.

Child-marriages in the "Borinage" are common and a curse, the effect of which is spreading disaster through the length and breadth of the mining district; indeed, so low a standard of morality and good feeling prevails that the miner, when seeking a wife, will choose without compunction the girl who has had the greatest number of illegitimate children—this because he hopes that they will contribute by their work to the household expenses. It is quite a usual thing to find in a miner's cottage, with his own children, four or five others, often of different parentage—the sons and daughters of the miner's wife before marriage, and by other unions than the existing one.

It is the habits and customs to which we have referred which make Hainault a dark blot upon the map of Belgium. A district notorious for its immorality, crime, and brutalized population.

As one cycles along the roads on the way to Mons, roads which from the grey-whiteness of those we have up to the present traversed have gradually become black, one meets at sundown the stunted generation of miners flowing in their hundreds and thousands out of the colliery gates, dull with fatigue, and often bemused with the effects of the *schmick* they have been drinking all day. Nor are the women and girls more pleasant figures; perhaps even less so. One passes hundreds of them, low of stature, with bare arms grimed with the dust of the coal they have been hauling or tipping out of huge wicker baskets upon railway sidings into the awaiting trucks, faces hard with the degradation of unfitting toil, arms and figures like those of prize-fighters—masses of muscle, almost denuded of any curve or softness. At first one may mistake them for gangs of boys and lads. Their heads are generally bound round with a piece of cotton stuff (the only attempt they seem to make towards womanliness is to guard their hair from the coal-dust), and they wear a shirt or blouse little differing at first sight from those of their husbands and brothers, and, if the day be hot, open almost to the waist. Many wear wide zouave knickerbockers of red flannel, others short, skimpy skirts. Often their muscular legs are bare, and their feet merely thrust into wooden *sabots*. Often, too, their feet are shoeless. Beings which those gifted with the kindest charity can scarcely look upon save with disgust.

The tender-hearted, the fastidious, those for whom an “under-world” such as might inspire a modern Dante to a modern “Epic of Hades” has any terror, should neither visit nor attempt to pass through the “Borinage” save by a swiftly travelling train. It is an experience which breeds nightmares, and for a time, at least, shakes one’s faith in the upward trend of the human race.

Even Charleroi and the district round about, with its iron furnaces, which make the countryside a Dantesque *Inferno* of a night, when the red, licking flames flare above the black and sombre furnace mouths, and redden the sky and cast weird shadows, is preferable.

Mons, the capital of Hainault, stands high above the Trouille, though the country through which one approaches it from Tournai is not really hilly. Caesar was at Mons (where has he not traditionally been?), and left behind him



a hill fort of considerable strategic importance. In the fourteenth century Jean d'Avesnes strongly fortified the town, and from that date onwards it saw the coming and going of armies, as did so many other Hainault towns. In May, 1572, the town fell into the hands of Prince Louis of Orange, who held it against the forces of the Duke of Alva till the middle of the following September, and by so doing enabled the northern provinces of the Low Countries to successfully throw off the Spanish yoke. The town was captured by Louis XIV. in 1691, and held by the French for a period of six years, but was given back to the Spaniards at the end of that time. Mons saw the entrance of the victorious Marlborough and Prince Eugene after the Battle of Malplaquet on September 11, 1709, and the defeat of the French under Marshal Villars, and the allied troops occupied it for some time. Its vicissitudes were, however, by no means ended, for in 1714, by the Treaty of Madrid, it was assigned to Austria, and was retaken by the French in 1742, and again by the Republican troops in 1792. As has been the case at Courtrai and many other old fortified towns of Belgium, the ancient ramparts and fortifications have been converted into public boulevards, from which some pretty views of the surrounding country are obtainable.

Mons of to-day is a pleasant, bustling town of some 30,000 inhabitants, combining with its modern air some interesting features of former times. Although most of the tourist life seems to centre round the station and in the lower part of the town, where are the chief—though most of them are unpretentious—hotels, the real centre of the town is the Grande Place, on which takes place on Trinity Sunday under the shadow of the ancient citadel, the quaint medieval fête known as *La Parade du Lumecon*, in which is a contest with a dragon, somewhat reminiscent of St. George and the Dragon. The hero is called Gilles de Chin, and the heroine is a princess, who was kept a prisoner by the monster in the forest near the town. It is a quaint festival and pageant well worth seeing if one happens to be anywhere in Hainault at the time it is performed. On the occasion of the fête, it is the custom to display a wooden imitation of the famous Mons cannon, said to have been used at the Battle of Crécy, when a contingent of Mons citizens fought against the French on

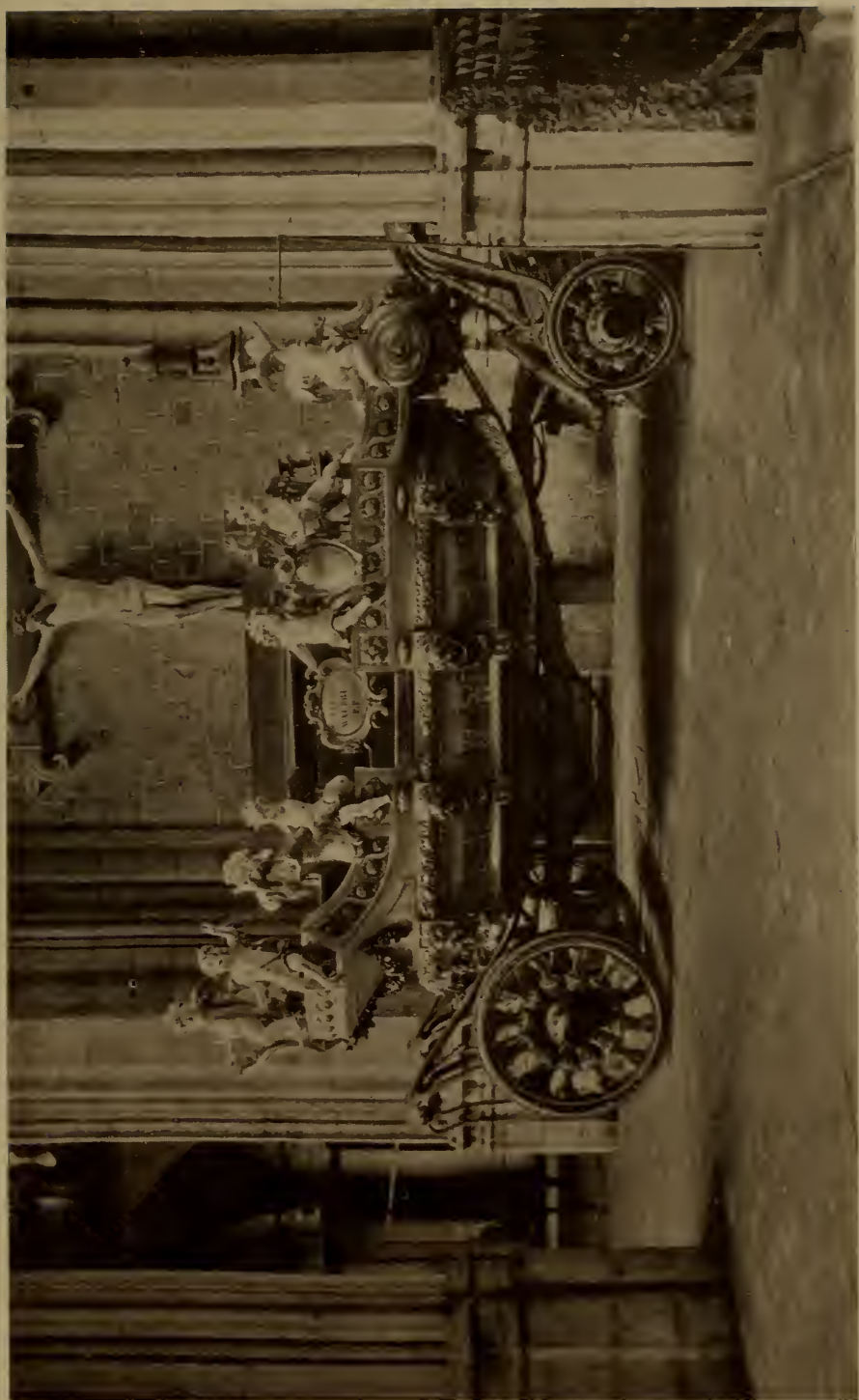
the side of the English and Edward III., who had married Eleanor, Countess of Hainault.

The Hôtel de Ville is an interesting, though uncompleted, Late Gothic building. It dates from the middle of the fifteenth century, and has ten windows in the upper story, whilst statuettes adorn the façade in niches between the windows. In the central baroque tower is a curious clock, the work of Louis Ledoux, by which the inhabitants of Mons, and more especially those in the vicinity of the Grande Place, set some considerable store. The courtyard of the Hôtel de Ville is interesting, and the interior of the building, with its Gothic room, with large paintings illustrative of the history of the town, by Modeste Carlier, Hennebicq, and Paternostre, are worth seeing. We noticed, among other modern pictures hung in one of the large rooms, in particular some quite excellent portraits—several by local artists—of Mons celebrities of the past and present.

The two buildings on either side of the Hôtel de Ville, the Maison de la Toison d'Or and the Chapel of St. George, with their Renaissance fronts, are worth attention.

There is an interesting library in the Rue des Gades, far better stocked with valuable and important works than is usually the case in towns of a similar size. Among the upwards of 40,000 volumes it contains are a considerable number of early illuminated manuscripts, several of which, we noted, contained miniatures of great interest. The bibliophile and the student are likely to linger in this library of Mons, and there is a good deal to interest even the casual visitor who has any liking for books and manuscripts.

The most important and interesting building remaining in Mons is undoubtedly the fine Late Gothic cathedral, dedicated to St. Waltrudis. It is one of the few great churches of Belgium which has escaped disfigurement by plaster and whitewash. For this reason it presents a very interesting example of the true decoration—simple, but effective and pleasing—of the time. Commenced in the middle of the fifteenth century from designs by the famous architect of the beautiful Hôtel de Ville at Louvain, Matthew de Layens, the choir was completed in 1502, the transepts taking nearly twenty years longer, and the nave not being finished until 1589. Even then some slight additions and embellishments were found necessary in 1621. The tower



TRIUMPHAL CAR OF ST. WALTRUCHO IN THE CATHEDRAL, MONS





was never built; the church possessing only a small spire, placed above the crossing, and elegant Gothic pinnacles. Prior to 1896 the church was much masked by contiguous buildings, but now can be more satisfactorily viewed and appreciated. It is distinguished both inside and out for boldness and elegance of design, the flying buttresses with their crocketed pinnacles being a notable feature of the exterior elevation. Slender clustered columns, sixty in number, rising without capitals to the vaulting and keystones, at once attract the eye, and the general effect of the interior is one of space and elegance. The church is lighted by no less than ninety windows, and under those of the nave and transepts is a very tasteful triforium. The chief dimensions of the church give a good idea of its fine proportions, the extreme length being 355 feet; breadth, 116 feet; and height, 80 feet. The stained glass of the choir, dating from the sixteenth century, has been not very successfully restored. The rich, though modern, reliquary of the patron saint of the church, who died in 685, is to be seen behind the high altar. The elaborate and somewhat bizarre triumphal car, on which the reliquary is borne in procession through the streets of the town on the saint's day, is a prominent object in the vestibule of the church.

There is a fine Renaissance altar in the Chapel of Ste. Mary Magdalene (the fourth chapel on the left-hand side of the ambulatory), by Jacques Dubroeucq, a native of Mons, who is also the sculptor of the figures in the choir and at the piers below the crossing. Originally the church possessed a fine rood loft, dating from the sixteenth century, also by this artist. This was, however, destroyed by the Republican troops when they took the city in 1792.

The impression made upon the mind of the visitor as a whole by this interesting and finely-proportioned building, with its many points of interest, which there is no space to describe in detail, is one of considerable charm. It is well lighted and, viewed from the west end, is impressive.

Hard by the Cathedral, in the Place St. Germain, or, rather, in the garden which has taken the place of a portion of the ancient fortifications, stands a monument to Burgo-master François Dolez, a memorial in much better artistic taste than usual with erections commemorating citizens in the towns of our own land. The winged figure surmounting

the plinth of stone is of great beauty, and when seen from the front harmonizes admirably with the famous Renaissance belfry, which rises in the background. The latter, from the design of Louis Ledoux, was built in 1662, and restored two centuries later by Sury. Mons, as a town, has all the added quaintness and interest which comes from being built on the sides of a hill, the steeply ascending or descending streets affording picturesque and occasionally charming vistas of old-time houses and irregular and finely-coloured roofs.

The military element is strong in Mons, for it is a garrison town; which fact, in a measure, accounts for the air of life and bustle in the streets of an evening, a feature so often lacking in the old towns of West Flanders.

The road out of Mons is still black, and the highway of the toiling "Borains." Those who like neither dirt nor the too evident horrors of unremitting, and for women and girls degraded, toil may well pass through it to Charleroi and even Namur itself by train.

Gradually, as one leaves Mons behind, set upon the hill which Cæsar fortified, and glowing with a mysterious beauty given by the sunset, which catches the cupola of the lofty belfry, and paints it almost blood red, the "Borinage" commences to give way to the land of iron workers and iron furnaces, and if it be night the scene is weird enough to conjure up visions in the minds of travellers of the luridly painted Hell of those Belgian romancers who have taken this flaming counterpart of the underworld for their backgrounds.

Mariemont, where are some picturesque ruins of the château built in the middle of the sixteenth century by the Regent Mary of Hungary, and burned down but six years later by Henri II., has a great distinction from the fact that in the chapel of the modern but prettily situate château is the famous Shrine of St. Maur, a Romanesque reliquary dating from the twelfth century, and the oldest known work of art of its kind in Belgium.

Formerly known as Charnoy, this centre of the south Belgian industry was renamed Charleroi in compliment to Charles II. of Spain, who founded the industry. It, like Tournai, has been the scene of many sieges. The Republican forces of France attacked it four times in the memorable year of 1794. And it was just in sight of the



town that the Austrians gained a notable victory over the French on May 23 of the same year. But there is nothing much in modern Charleroi to deserve pause.

From Charleroi onwards to delightfully-situate Namur our way lies by the banks of the tortuously winding Sambre—longer than the direct route, but delightful—past green fields, waving corn, apple orchards, and here and there a monastery or château, charmingly placed in some bend of the river, skirting pleasantly wooded hills. Floreffe, set upon an eminence, with its picturesque Premonstratensian abbey, and interesting stalactite caves, is passed, and a little distance further the Abbey buildings of Malonne. Hereabouts the valley of the Sambre is thick with ancient and picturesque châteaux. And then in a few miles, round the bend in the river, Namur comes in sight, its one-time strong castle and fortifications set high above the two rivers on which the town stands, a verdant green mass against the clear sky.

## CHAPTER VI

### NAMUR, DINANT, GIVET, THE VALLEY OF THE MEUSE, AND THE ROAD TO BRUSSELS

NAMUR is not only picturesquely situate and historically interesting, but is also a flourishing and very pleasant town much frequented by tourists in the Ardennes, those on their way down to the beautiful valley of the Meuse, or intent upon exploring the environs of the ancient capital of the countship which fell to the share of Burgundy in 1420. It owes not a little of its present-day prosperity to its position upon two navigable rivers, the Sambre and the Meuse. The former is now "canalized," and a busy highway to the "Borinage" and other parts of the country. It is not easy when walking the clean and in many cases unusually wide streets of Namur to realize that it has not a little commercial importance from its being a manufacturing town. Cutlery is made to some considerable extent, and the tanning industry is a flourishing one.

Namur, from the earliest times onward, has been a place of strategic and military importance, and at a very early period there was undoubtedly a fortress on the hill now crowned by the old fortifications, portions of which have been converted into delightful public promenades and gardens with fine and extensive views of the town, surrounding country, and valleys of the Meuse and Sambre. A particularly charming peep of the older riverside houses, and the bridges spanning the Sambre is looking backward, got from a point a little less than half-way up the steeply inclining path to the citadel.

Of recent years Namur has once more become an important factor in the chain of fortifications which lie along

the Meuse, and is now surrounded by a circle of nine detached forts placed at distances of from two and a half to a little over four miles. It is for this reason that artists and amateur photographers should exercise care when engaged in painting or photographing, lest they share the fate of a too enterprising friend of our own, who was arrested on a charge of espionage for coming within the area of the fortifications whilst using his camera, and was at first—such is the “spy mania” on the Continent—treated with some amount of harshness.

Around the Place de la Station are grouped some of the most important hotels, and to this spot gravitates most of the life, commercial and otherwise, of the city. Approached by the wide Boulevard Leopold—into which one strikes by way of the Avenue Omailius when one leaves the pleasant tow-path of the Sambre, along which we came to enter the town—the Place extends eastward until it merges in the tree-shadowed Square Leopold (which rather deserves the name of *Jardin*), and thence debouches upon the Place Leopold, with its noted statue, by Geefs, of Leopold I., first King of the Belgians, formerly Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, and husband of Princess Charlotte, only daughter of our own King George IV. The Place de la Station, with its steam-trams and ever-changing life of the town, is a spot of considerable interest. More especially is this so on a fête day, when the countryfolk of the valleys of the Sambre and Meuse flock into Namur in quaint and picturesque holiday costumes.

Namur is, indeed, a pleasant town, with delightful open spaces, and at least one (so far as we have noticed) unique feature amongst Belgian towns. Almost every lamp-post is a miniature flower-garden. Just below the lantern is placed a wirework circular basket, about 3 feet in diameter, filled with lobelias, nasturtiums, pink-flowered ivy-leaf geraniums, clematis, and other suitable plants, which give the streets not only a touch of pleasant colour, but a look as though they were perpetually *en fête*, a custom which might well be imitated, at least by some of our own holiday resorts.

In addition to the charmingly laid-out public walks and slopes of the Rampe Verte environing the ancient fortress and the modern citadel, there is the pretty Parc Marie Louise, with its picturesque sheet of ornamental water and



well-shaded walks, at the end of the tree-planted Boulevard de la Sambre, and adjoining the Avenue d'Ormalus. From the Boulevard and the Park delightful views are obtained across the river of the Citadel, which occupies approximately the site on which the fortress-dwelling of the Counts of Namur originally stood. The latter was replaced towards the close of the seventeenth century by a strong fortress, the work of Cahorn, the famous Dutch engineer, who was the French Vauban's most formidable rival. This was captured in 1695 by William III. of England, an account of which appears in Sterne, the hero being Uncle Toby, as doubtless readers of the immortal "Tristram Shandy" will remember. It was partially destroyed by Joseph II., and ultimately restored in 1817 by the Dutch.

The Citadel itself is no longer regarded as a first-class or impregnable fortress, the defence of the town and environs, as we have mentioned, as well as that of the line of communication between Namur and Liège and the valley of the Meuse, being secured by a circle of nine detached forts, which, commenced in 1882 and finished some ten years later, are of the latest type of the system which was inaugurated by the well-known General Brialmont.

Namur possesses several fine churches grouped somewhat closely together, and almost in the centre of the city. Of these, that of St. Loup is the most interesting. Erected in the Baroque Style of the second quarter of the seventeenth century, it possesses an imposing façade. The interior is spacious, the roof being supported by twelve red marble Doric pillars. The choir strikes one as somewhat flamboyant on account of the large amount of coloured marble used in its construction, and the ceilings are covered with rather heavily conceived stucco ornamentation. A reminder of the days gone by, when Namur was a pawn in the games of kings, and its possession deemed a matter of great importance, is to be seen in the large hole in the ceiling, said to have been caused by one of the shells thrown into the town during its siege by Louis XIV. in 1693. Of special interest are the wonderfully carved confessionals, which, for elaborateness, almost rival those of Notre Dame, Antwerp.

The Cathedral, dedicated to St. Aubin, or St. Alban, and built on the site of a very much more ancient church,

is a fine building in brick. It is, however, chiefly interesting to the student as a good example of the late Renaissance buildings, of which there were at one time such a number of magnificent examples in Belgium, many of them were unhappily pulled down at the time of the suppression of religious houses. As one well-known authority has said regarding the surviving churches of this particular period—"If they were not entirely models of taste, yet they never or seldom fell into mere copyings of classicality, which was one of the architectural curses of other countries."

The Cathedral was built during the sixteen years elapsing between 1751 and 1767, the architect was the well-known Italian, Pizzoni, of Milan. Of the older church, only the belfry remains. The interior is impressive and well-proportioned. The choir-screen is interesting from the fact that it was anciently in the Abbaye de Gembloux, founded in 922 by St. Wicbert, or Guibert, and situated some dozen miles north-west of Namur, on the direct route to Brussels, now the Royal Institution of Agriculture and Forestry.

There are some interesting statues, notably those of the four Fathers of the Church—Augustine, Ambrose, Gregory, and Jerome, all of which came originally from the Abbaye de Floreffe, some six miles out of Namur, along the picturesque banks of the Sambre. On either side of the high altar are figures of St. Peter and St. Paul in marble, the work of Laurent Delvaux, of Ghent; but, with the exception of Parmentier's monument to Bishop Pisani de la Guade, who died in 1826, and the tomb of Don John of Austria, the remaining sculptures and monuments are mediocre, and of small interest. The tombstone erected by Alexander Farnese to his "*amatissi avunculo*" (beloved maternal uncle), Don John, is placed at the back of the high altar. We are told the heart and garments of the conqueror at the naval battle of Lepanto on October 7, 1571, who died at his camp near Bouge, about a mile to the east of Namur, on October 1, 1578, were buried beneath the high altar, though his body was removed to the Escorial.

The wooden pulpit of the Cathedral is a fine one and worth attentive examination. It was carved by Karel Hendrick Geerts, of Antwerp. The subject is the Madonna protecting the city of Namur. The treasury should be visited if only for the curious and interesting statuette of

St. Blaise dating from the early part of the fourteenth century, and the famous golden crown of some two centuries earlier date. There are also some gold and silver crosses contained in fine reliquaries.

The town belfry, which stands a little to the north of the Hôtel de Ville, was built towards the close of the fourteenth century, and rebuilt during the sixteenth.

In the Hôtel de Ville, which is an unpretentious building, are a few good modern paintings, and very little else of note. To the north of the Grande Place, on which the Hôtel de Ville and Casino stand, is the Convent of the Sœurs de Notre Dame. This should be visited by those interested in ancient ecclesiastical plate, as the Treasury is unusually rich in vessels and other objects of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The ancient Boucherie, which was erected in 1588, is now turned into an Archæological Museum containing a very large and varied collection of antiquities chiefly relating to the Province of Namur. Indeed, it is held to be the most complete collection of local archæology in Belgium, and some authorities say in Europe. Many hours might be spent in this ancient building examining its wonderful and deeply interesting antiquities, which range from skulls from the caverns of Marche-les-Dames (some supposed to be those of prehistoric man); articles of the Stone Age from Linciaux, Sclaigneaux, Hastodon and other places; bronzes from Ciney, Jambes, and Franchimont, Ante-Roman and Frankish remains, pottery, etc.; specimens of fifth-century glass, and axes from Eprave; Belgic-Roman antiquities found at Namur, Anthée, Wancennes, Flavion, and other places; and many objects taken from ancient tombs and burying-places of the fifth century onwards. There is an intensely interesting eleventh or twelfth century sarcophagus brought from a church at Hastière down the Meuse just below Dinant.

The most notable of the old houses appeared to us to be found along the left bank of the Sambre and in the narrow streets which lead from it back into the centre of the town. The tow-path runs along at the back of old-time mills, tanneries and breweries for some considerable distance, and then one comes to the Boulevard de la Sambre opposite the more modern suburb of Salzinnes, and gradually gets back





ALONG THE BANKS OF THE SAMBRE, NAMUR



into the country, the river becoming more picturesque and rural, and the domain of the *blanchisseuses* commencing. Scores of women are daily at work washing clothes in the Sambre—the water of which we did not think as pellucid as it might have been—or busily engaged in spreading the newly washed linen on the hedgerows or on the coarse grass beside the river bank.

Of “types” there are many to be met with in a walk along this busy river. Bargemen all the world over are interesting, and those of Belgium with their generally cheery dispositions, good fellowship, and rough vigorous humour certainly only need a Belgian W. W. Jacobs to become immortalized. For the most part they are hard-working souls when *en route*, and if when lying alongside the quays of such towns as Namur, Bruges, Ghent, Termonde or Malines they exhibit a liking for spending the greater portion of their spare time within the *cabarets*, and a considerable portion of their spare cash in beer, and even in *schmick* or *genièvre*, perhaps one can scarcely wonder. The life is hard and monotonous, and as a class the Belgian bargees compare favourably with those of our own waterways. Their women folk are unusually clean, thrifty, and neat; and the boats themselves in many cases are kept as tidy and clean-washed as a yacht, with the long rudder pole gaily painted, flowers in boxes on deck, and almost always a dog snugly kennelled aft or amidships.

The barge is a home for many of the families, and the bargee's ambition is to own his own boat. More than one “ancient mariner” of the waterways, picturesque, rugged, and looking “hard as nails,” might have sat for the pen portraits with which the author of “Sunlight Port,” “Many Cargoes,” and “The Lady and the Barge,” has familiarized us. Artists seemed to us always painting barges and bargees on the Sambre at Namur, and outside the waterside *cabarets*, on any afternoon in the week, there were seated “types” enough and to spare, none of whom seemed to object to posing for photographs, provided a cigar or the price of a *bock* was forthcoming.

But the beautiful valley of the Meuse calls, and one cannot linger indefinitely even in so picturesque and pleasant a town as Namur. The interesting old Pont de Jambes, with its nine arches, connects Namur with its suburb of Jambes.



From Namur the traveller has the choice of three ways of reaching Dinant and Givet. The first, by rail, is perhaps the most frequently taken; the second, by the "tourist" steamers, which run between Namur and Dinant during the summer and *vice versa*, is very popular in fine weather, and, indeed, scarcely a more pleasant and picturesque manner of travelling can be imagined. The third method is by either motoring, driving, or cycling, as we did, along the fine road which runs most of the way quite close to the beautiful Meuse, and yet allows one to become acquainted with not only the tiny and quaint villages by its side, but also to see something of the scenery of fields, woods, and rocky crags.

The left bank of the river is that most frequented by cyclists and motorists, and for some considerable distance after the pleasant Boulevard de Meuse and the shady garden park of La Plante are left behind, the pedestrian and cyclist will do well to continue along the tow-path instead of following the main road a little inland from the river bank. By doing so, one sees many picturesque groups of *blanchisseuses* industriously washing and rinsing their huge piles of linen at the various slipways constructed for the purpose along the banks, or carrying on these operations from roughly made, though doubtless serviceable, punts. The anglers of the Meuse—almost, it would appear, as patient as their brothers of the Seine, or the immortal one of Burnand's "Happy Thoughts"—are a distinct feature. They are of all ages and of both sexes. One finds the urchin of Pairelle, Wepion, or Fooz, with his bean pole, cotton line, and a bent pin for hook; the "sporting" man from Namur, dressed for the part, with the best steel core fly rod and tackle, creel, landing-net, campstool, and all complete; priests who have come out of the monastery, or presbytery hard by, who, both by their attitude and intentness on the sport, inevitably remind one of "To-morrow will be Friday"; the father of the family—a true bourgeois type—seated in a "Windsor" chair or its Belgian equivalent, or standing against the substantial rail which borders the tow-path, whilst madame, his wife, sits hard by, either knitting or reading the newspaper; the young lady anglers, some of them in dainty muslin frocks and with toy-like rods in their hands, and with arch glances for passing pedestrians

or cyclists of the other sex. These types are all met with along that fine stretch of river frontage which lies between Namur and pleasant and picturesque Wepion.

All the way to Dinant, on both banks of the river, there are some beautiful and delightfully placed modern châteaux, mostly the property of Namur and Brussels merchant princes, and those of other large towns. The natural scenery of wooded heights, rocks, and river is wonderfully varied when one remembers the comparative confined area, and the short distance of some twenty miles which lies between Namur and Dinant. At Profondeville, the "Rock of the Arcade" is sure to attract attention, a curious natural piercing of the solid cliff, but a little further on the more famous marble quarries are passed. From Profondeville, onwards to Rivière, the road is charmingly picturesque, and the river equally so. Rocky heights shut one in for a mile or so, and then comes a break with narrow green fields and grassy slopes stretching down to the Meuse on one hand, and away to the hills on the other. Then after a sharp bend one sees on the opposite bank the quaint old *seigneurie* of Godinne, half château, half farm, with its feet literally in the river, white-walled, spired, and with its roofs and gables covered with grey-blue slates, throwing reflections in the evening light half across the river. This beautiful old building is environed on its northern side by trees, and with its walls mellowed by age, river mists and storms, has the village church, dating from the sixteenth century, adjoining it in the same style of architecture. Once a portion of the patrimony of the well-known Du Mesnil family, it was purchased some years ago by the Comte de Brouchoven, who added it to his immense estates in this part of the Valley of the Meuse.

Less than a mile further on the road to Dinant, set in yet another bend of the winding river, lies pretty little Rouillon, clinging to the flank of a steep hill, with its picturesque Château of Hestroy. The village is the resort of many Brussels folk and even "foreigners" during the summer months. People mostly come to Rouillon for the boating (which is delightful), the fishing (which is good), and the living (which is cheap). Here we ran across some American visitors, who spoke of a charming holiday they were having, and chicken to be bought at a franc and a

half apiece ! “ We can just live for next door to nothing at all,” one of the ladies of the party explained. “ And I guess it’s nice for a change some.”

Almost midway between Rouillon and Hun towers the celebrated craggy eminence known in the *patois* of the district as the Roche aux Chauwes, or “ Crow’s Rock,” though the crows are in reality jackdaws. The rock is an enormous slatey-white mass, towering high above the road, riven into gullies and crevasses by the action of the weather through long ages, and pierced with hundreds of cavities in which the jackdaws from time immemorial have nested, making the air resound by their hoarse and shrill screaming, which is weird enough to frighten nervous folk after dusk when the birds happen to be wheeling in disturbed flocks around their almost inaccessible home. This rock and its generations of feathered inhabitants is the subject of a well-known legend known as “ The Fairy and the Troubadour,” by De Nimal in his “ Légendes de la Meuse,” a curious and picturesquely written volume well worth reading.

The story runs somewhat in this way: A well-born youth, whose father destined him for the Church, wished to become a poet. In the days of long ago poets more often sang or recited their poems than published them bound in cloth covers, and so this one became a wandering minstrel or troubadour, visiting in turn, as was the practice of these, the various castles scattered about in Belgium, the Rhine district, and other lands. At length he came to the banks of the Meuse, and one day near Rouillon he encountered a pretty sprite, with whom he fell promptly in love. They loved one another, and retired to pass their idyll in one of the caverns of the rock. Alas ! for the lovers. Though poets have so frequently been free in their fancies and fickle in their love-making, the fairy-love of the troubadour was not. She was obliged to leave her poet-lover and return, like others of her kind, to the gathering which was held each year to choose a queen. There she was charged publicly with her conduct of having espoused a mortal ; and as a punishment she was changed into the semblance of a hideous black crow with a voice, not like her own sweet “ Lorelei ” one, but hoarse and unmusical. Her lover underwent the same metamorphosis.

They did not weep or repine, but saw each other in their



new guise as beautiful as when they were troubadour and fairy! Such is love's alchemy.

The story goes on to say that they continued to inhabit the cavern in which they had passed their honeymoon, and in due time had many descendants, which one can see any day of the week wheeling in noisy flocks around the great crag.

Quite close by are some interesting and picturesque castles and ruins. Notably those of Poilvache and Crève-Cœur. The former is merely a heap of ruins of a medieval fortress, which was destroyed by the French in 1554, standing upon a lofty eminence just after one passes Hun.

The latter is situate near Bouvignes, just before one enters the outskirts of Dinant by way of a delightfully tree-shaded road. To Crève-Cœur attaches one of those semi-heroic legends of the days of chivalry, when the women of castles and fortresses were often not less brave than the men. Bouvignes was in those ancient times constantly engaged in feuds and disputes with Dinant. It is now but a small village; though one of the most interesting and venerable in this particular district. The legend runs that in 1554 Henry II. of France, then at war with Charles Quint, seized and sacked the place. Three beautiful women, left as the only survivors after the massacre of their husbands, with the rest of the garrison of Crève-Cœur, threw themselves, in sight of the besiegers, from the summit of one of the towers of the Château and were dashed to pieces on the rocks, rather than surrender to the insults and outrages of the conquerors, who were not in those days noted for tender treatment of prisoners, either male or female. The Château all along had been gallantly defended by Pierre Harroy, its captain, and the garrison greatly encouraged in the defence by these gallant ladies. The following lines, to be found in Alfred Nicholas' "Voyages et Aventures au Royaume de Belgique," describes the incident :

" Pour ne point tomber vivantes  
Aux mains des durs assiegeants,  
Les trois dames bravement  
S'en vont sur le tour branlante  
Monter en blanc vêtements  
Et par la main se tenant.  
Elles font une prière  
En levant au ciell es yeux,

Et puis d'un saut merveilleux,  
Quittant la tour meurtrière,  
Tombent dans l'air du bon Dieu  
Sur le piques et les pieux.  
Depuis ce trépas si digne  
Qui nous crève à tous la cœur,  
On appelle Crève-cœur  
Le vieux château de Bouvignes.  
Qu'il plaise au divin Seigneur  
Prendre leur âme en douceur."

In pretty, quaint Bouvignes one comes across many traces of its ancient greatness in fragments of architecture, and here and there an ancient house. On the market-place is the Maison du Bailliage (or residence of the bailiwick) a fine sixteenth-century building, one of the most remarkable in the Meuse valley. It was in all probability built to replace the château destroyed during the famous siege of 1554, and long served as a meeting-place for the bailiffs of the town. Quite close to this Maison du Bailliage is the thirteenth-century church reached by a stone staircase. Unfortunately, the restorations which have from time to time been undertaken have been made in bad taste, and have almost entirely ruined the building. In the choir, however, are several interesting objects, including an altar lamp and lectern of brass beautifully worked.

Dinant is but a couple of kilometres distant, and is soon reached by the tree-environed road, elevated a considerable height above the river, which is distant only a hundred yards or so. The railway has now crossed the latter, and the road into Dinant runs beside it for some considerable distance. Opposite Bouvignes is the little river Leffe, and in the gorge, or narrow valley, through which it flows, are situated some extremely picturesque water-mills. A little way up the valley stands the ancient and famous Abbaye de Leffe, established in the middle of the twelfth century, and formerly occupied by the Premonstratensians. Within its walls in 1466 lodged on the first night of his arrival at Dinant Charles le Téméraire. Since the times of the Revolution the Abbey has seen many vicissitudes, having been in turn glass-works, paper-mill, and brewery, in 1903 returning to its original use as a home for the sons of St. Norbert. A huge chapel has replaced the ancient church, which was destroyed. On the slopes of the hill



THE CHÂTEAU DE GODINNE ON THE BANKS OF THE MEUSE





opposite are still to be seen the terraces formerly occupied by the vineyards for which the Abbey was noted.

The first real view of Dinant breaks upon one most picturesquely through a gap in the trees and foliage which skirt the riverside the last mile or so of the road, which slopes gently down to the station-yard—at Dinant they do not apparently dignify this space with the name of Place de la Station—and seen at sundown this peep is indeed beautiful and charming.

Dinant proper, now numbering about 8,000 inhabitants, and once of much strategic importance, lies on the right bank of the river, the houses, hotels, convent, few shops, and railway station on the left bank being considered a suburb, and known as St. Médard.

The origin of the town is by many writers supposed to date from Roman times. The first name being Arche, the one by which it is now known having been given it much later. There are several theories regarding the name Dinant. That old and gossipy chronicler, Jean D'Outre-Meuse, gives the origin in a pretty legend, which runs as follows: Long ages ago, St. Materne, the apostle of the Ardennes, who was also Bishop of Tongres, came one day to the town whilst on an episcopal visitation or pilgrimage, and whilst walking in the streets came upon an idol set up, which the townsfolk called Nam. Pointing to the figure, he exclaimed: "Dis, or Dic Nam, pourquoi te tiens tu ici" (literally, "Tell me, Nam, why thou art found or set up here"). The inhabitants, the chronicler goes on to say, not hearing the whole of the saint's remarks, only the first two words, called their town forthwith Dinant. Other writers are of the opinion that the name was derived from Diane, or Dioné, and that the statue referred to was one of Diana.

Dinant, viewed from across the water, has a strangely quaint and attenuated look. The huge limestone cliffs, crowned by trees, and with ferns and lichen beautifying their face, at the back of the thin rows of buildings, towering high above the picturesque roofs and chimney-stacks, create an impression upon the beholder of endeavouring to thrust the houses from a precarious footing into the jade-coloured river itself. The modern iron bridge, which replaced the ancient one of stone in 1870, handsome though it be, con-

necting St. Médard with Dinant proper, somehow strikes one as being out of the picture.

Dinant has seen many vicissitudes, and during the Middle Ages it was frequently attacked, several times by the Burgundians. In addition, it was apparently in constant feud with Bouvignes, then "a place of strength and renown, capable of putting not less than 15,000 fighting men into the field." In 1466 the Dinantais aroused the anger of Philippe le Bon, Duke of Burgundy, who marched against the town in company with his son, afterwards to become known as Charles the Bold.

The quarrel between the Dinantais and the Duke of Burgundy arose from the fact that the Duke had ordered them to destroy and dismantle the fortress of Mont Orgueil, which they had built on the heights above the cathedral in reply to the strong tower of Crève-Cœur, erected by their enemies, the inhabitants of Bouvignes.

A few years later, hearing that the Burgundians had been severely defeated by the people of Liège, the Dinantais marched towards Bouvignes with an effigy of the Duke's son Charles, Count of Charolais, swinging between a gallows, "which they showed, with many insults, to their enemies of Bouvignes."

Unfortunately for the Dinantais, they had been supplied with an inaccurate account of events. The Liégeois had been defeated and not victorious, and the Burgundians were at the time marching to attack Dinant and avenge the insult to their Duke's heir. The latter was in command of 30,000 men. He took up his quarters at the fine Abbey of Leffe, and forthwith proceeded to invest Dinant, which he shortly afterwards captured. The place was sacked, only the priests, women, and children being spared and deported to Liège. And of the rest of the inhabitants, who at that date were said to have numbered upwards of 30,000, 800 were made prisoners, marched to Bouvignes, and there thrown into the Meuse to drown.

A little less than a century later, in 1554, Dinant was once more besieged, taken and plundered, this time by the French, under the Duc de Nevers; and in 1675 the same enemies were at the gates with the same end in view.

In the Middle Ages the town was celebrated for its brass and copper ware, and the work of its *dinandiers* was famous



throughout Europe. The town, several times burnt almost to the ground, rose, phoenix-like, from its ashes, but the famous industry was almost entirely destroyed when Dinant fell a prey to the Burgundians in 1466. In the *cocques de Dinant*, or the strange flat ginger-bread cakes which form so prominent a feature of the confectioners' and bakers' shops nowadays, one has surviving a representation of the repoussé plaques and other utensils of brass and copper for which the town was anciently noted. In the fifteenth century, before its fall, Dinant, which was attached to the See of Liège, contained upwards of 30,000 inhabitants, possessed a dozen churches, seven abbeys, strong fortifications, town walls, and brass foundries, employing no less than 8,000 men. The Dinant of the past is unequivocal, but the charming and picturesque town of the present, the objective of thousands of tourists during each summer season, has taken its place.

Notre Dame, the principal church, with its almost mosque-like spire apparently out of the perpendicular, dates from the thirteenth century, and stands close against the rocky face of the citadel, upon the site of a much older building. It is particularly interesting, as it is one of the best specimens of Early Gothic architecture in Belgium, with a few traces of the Transition Period discernible. It has undergone of recent years a very complete restoration, which has been undertaken in a moderate, and, on the whole, intelligent, spirit. The building is not a large one, measuring only some 160 feet, with a width between the transepts varying from 65 to 90 feet. There are three naves without lateral chapels, the chief some 70 feet in height, the other two about 45 feet. The choir, restricted by the face of the rock, has been stunted of its normal development, and this has somewhat destroyed the proportion and general effect of the building. The baptistery on the right of the nave, with an ancient font, probably belonged to the Roman church which preceded the present building. The font dates at least as far back as the twelfth century. The large window in the side of the church facing the Place should be noted on account of its ornate mullions. Behind the high altar is a much more ancient one dedicated to Perpetuo, who was Bishop of Tongres in the sixth century.

In addition to the tower and spire, to which we have already called attention as forming so distinctive a feature of the town, the very beautiful south door, dating from the latter half of the thirteenth century, will attract the eye of artist and student alike. Each of the arches has four tabernacles in two rows, giving sixteen spaces for statuary, of which, however, little remains, and that sorely mutilated. The tympanum is of unusual charm, and it is filled by five arches, diminishing in width from the centre, with each compartment cusped and surmounted by a straight-sided canopy. The space between these canopies and the head of the arch is richly carved. The outer arch of all is most elegantly designed, and in the space formed by it and the surmounting gable one finds three niches, in the central one of which there is a greatly mutilated group, apparently representing the coronation of the Virgin.

Quite close to the church is the stone staircase of 408 steps leading up to the citadel, condemned as out of date in 1853, now the property of a private owner. It is shown to visitors for a fee of fifty centimes, and there is a museum attached containing a number of relics of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, including some interesting objects from Sedan. The views of the valley of the Meuse and of the picturesque old town, obtained from the citadel walls and at various points of the road up, more especially from the footpath which starts by way of the Rue St. Jacques, well repay the climber.

The Jardin de Montfat, which word is a corruption of Montfort, the name given to a tower formerly standing on one of the rocks near by, is also picturesque, with fine views. It is situated quite close to the Palais de Justice, and contains a grotto, or cavern, anciently believed to be the abiding place of a sibyl, or prophetic sprite, who, so the story goes, was in the Middle Ages consulted by people from far and wide. Nowadays there is no sprite, nor, so far as we discovered, even a fortune-teller; and therein the Dinantais show lack of enterprise, for the spot is an ideal one for romance and the profitable prosecution of so mysterious a calling.

The old Hôtel de Ville, abutting upon the river, and placed about midway down the main street, is a curiously constructed building, dating from the seventeen and eighteenth

centuries, and originally used as a lodging-place for ecclesiastics of the Principality on their visits to Dinant. It contains a few pictures of that mad genius, Anton Joseph Wiertz, a native of the town, who enjoyed in the early years of his artistic career an astonishing vogue. He possessed great natural talent, and at first appears to have been a close student of the works of Rubens and Michael Angelo in Rome. Ultimately he became an apostle of strange art conceits, somewhat of the school of Goya; ultimately entirely losing his mental balance and producing mere artistic nightmares, characterized by eccentricity of idea and great mechanical dexterity of execution.

Beyond its quaintness and charm of situation there is little else to detain one in Dinant, though an amusing evening can be spent at the little Casino, which provides a concert, the ever-popular *cinema*, and a pleasant garden. On the evening we spent there play was going on recalling in a measure the days of the fine Kursaal, which was closed when the heavy tax on gambling establishments was imposed a few years ago. The element of chance, which appeals to the Continental holiday-maker so strongly, was provided by the running in a groove up and down a table of a small lead or iron figure of a soldier, operated by a lever. At the side of the figure was a raised ridge divided into sections, painted different colours, and labelled: La Russie, La Belgique, La France, L'Angleterre, La Germanie, etc. The figure carried a flexible staff in its hand, which ran over the notches on top of the groove, and of course as the impetus given by the spring was exhausted, it eventually stopped dead with the staff fixed in one or other of the many notches opposite one of the names of the countries. At each side of the groove on the table the green cloth was divided up into squares, named after the countries represented, and upon La France, L'Angleterre, La Russie, La Belgique, etc., the gamblers placed their stakes. The notches in the centre groove, in which the staff of the little figure lodged, were of different values, giving a return of the stake plus its value, twice the value, three times the value, and so on. Quite considerable sums of money were lost and won at this game, which was almost as exciting as *petit chevaux*. Any player was allowed to operate the lever which started the little soldier or despatch-runner on his journey up and down



the table, but was then obliged to place stakes upon the table.

It was obvious that "old hands," and there were several present, both men and women, from long study of the pull of the lever controlling the apparatus and spring which operated the figure, were able to calculate with some considerable degree of accuracy the point or country against which the little runner would eventually stop, and stake their money accordingly. One man in particular who started the figure fully a score of times in succession, only made three errors of judgment, and won some £12 or £14. Quite a young girl was equally successful, though she did not play with the coolness of the man. Naturally enough, these successes tempted many tyros to try their luck, which they did usually with splendid results—for the Casino Company. Although the stakes were limited to five francs for the maximum, the minimum being a franc, a very large amount of money changed hands during the evening.

The road to Givet can be either by the right or the left bank. The left is the more direct, and that, we fancy, most usually taken. But before quitting Dinant, however, it is well worth while to do as we did, and ride or walk along the Rue Grand, and through the suburb of Les Rivages to La Roche à Bayard. This extraordinary and impressive rock, which was pierced in 1698 to allow of the passage of the baggage train of the French army—containing plunder which occupied 1,600 vehicles, that had been requisitioned in the district—is more than 100 feet in height, and 35 to 50 feet wide at its base. It was here that the horse of the "Quatre Fils d'Aymon," named Bayard, when pursued by Charlemagne, after having cleared the bottom of the Leffe, jumped from the top of the heights into the Meuse. The rock, so the legend states, bore the marks of the horse's shoes in the stone. It is said that after this wonderful feat, and having no horse which could emulate it, Charlemagne gave up the pursuit, and, smarting from his discomfiture, declared that Bayard was nothing but the devil in disguise. An old chronicler goes on to say: "As everyone knows that whether he be emperor or peasant, he is likely to be tricked by so wily a foe as the devil, Charlemagne's honour was preserved." It is also added that the Emperor and the army who had engaged in the pursuit were very fatigued and



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thirsty, and the Emperor, calling to mind the history of the river, planted his spear in the soil and fell on his knees, supplicating the Almighty to cause a well to spring forth. Almost immediately a spring arose at the spot, which has never dried up, and is known as the fountain of Charlemagne.

The direct road from Dinant along the left bank of the Meuse is an excellent one, with the exception of a mile or two between Hastière-par-delà and Hermeton, and follows the river and railway very closely. Anseremme, the resort of artists, with its ancient bridge and a viaduct of the railway up the Valley of the Lesse to Rochefort, on the opposite side of the Meuse, is the first place of importance to be passed, and as one does so the old legend of an Abbot of St. Hubert—who caused a regiment of varlets in medieval times to stay up o' nights beating the surface of the river so as to drive away the frogs who disturbed his rest by their croaking—comes to mind. The frogs, we fancy, must have been more numerous then than nowadays.

But a few kilometres further on and one comes upon the beautiful Château Freyer, with its well-kept and delightful pleasaunces laid out by Le Notre, it is said, on the model of those at Versailles. It stands close to the river bank, and the gardens are placed on the well-wooded slopes of the envioning hills. The château is an excellent example of seventeenth-century domestic architecture, and was built in 1637 by the then head of the Beaufort-Spontin family, whose descendants still inhabit it. The building is one of historic interest from the fact that it was here that the delegates of Louis XIV. and Charles II. of Spain signed the treaty of peace known as the Treaty of Freyer, on which occasion we are told coffee was for the first time served ceremoniously in Belgium.

In Victor Hugo's volume "Le Rhin," he writes of Freyer as a little cottage or a little cake-like structure, and as being like a clock of the time of Louis XV., "with its Liliputian ponds, and little pompadour garden, embracing all the 'volutes,' all the fantasticness, all the grimaces of a *coup d'œil*." How far Hugo is to be accepted as a critic, those who have seen the huge four-square château with its wide stretch of roof, broken here and there by dormers, and corner turrets, and its look of solidity, will best be able to judge. Possibly he had never seen it. Of it Jean d'Ardenne has

written, "Nothing could be more charming." And M. Paul Huysman says of Freyer: "It is a reincarnation infinitely gracious and entirely unexpected of the eighteenth century, and coquettish and adorned is this elegant park of Freyer. One almost expects to see some beribboned shepherds or some fair marquise with powdered hair flitting amongst its thickets."

On the opposite bank of the river in place of pleasant gardens and wooded thickets one has the abrupt contrast of huge rocks, bare in places, and in others covered with patches of verdure.

The scenery from Freyer to Waulsort increases in charm and grandeur. One comes suddenly upon a fine château, which is situated, as is that of Freyer, close to the road near a beautiful bend of the river. Once a dependence of the celebrated Benedictine abbey, this beautiful seat of the Comte de Laubespain, with its environment of trees and lofty poplars, has a grand square courtyard and massive façade. The abbey itself was destroyed by the desperadoes of the famous De Lecolle, Mayor of Givet, at the time of the French Revolution, in the name of the grand principles of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity! The beautiful grounds, unfortunately, have now been bisected by the railway line.

On the hill above the village of Waulsort, which is now the resort of many tourists and rapidly acquiring a vogue as a residential resort for Belgians retired from business, whose modern and in many cases somewhat pretentious châteaux, are to be seen dotted about on the hillsides, are the ruins of the ancient castle and fortress of Thierry, just below which is the famous Rocher du Chien. The ruins are more extensive than one would judge when viewing them from the road. The château, which dates from the fourteenth century, was once the stronghold of two robber knights, the sons of one Jacques de Boulan, whose depredations and crimes are enshrined in romance and local history. They not only terrorized the neighbourhood, and possessed a liking for carrying off good-looking maidens, but for a considerable period appear to have made the highway from France along the valley of the Meuse through the Ardennes dangerous for all travellers save those of the humblest rank, or those who journeyed in sufficient force or were strong enough to resist their attack. The castle was eventually

besieged and destroyed by the enraged Dinantais; but was afterwards rebuilt, passing into the possession of the Brandenburgs, and then into that of the Beaufort-Spontin family, who may almost be said to have a monopoly of the estates and castles of this district.

As one leaves Waulsort behind and advances towards the three Hastière villages, the valley contracts, and the scenery becomes wilder and more impressive. At the end of the narrow Ranle gorge a strangely-tinted rock stands out challenging notice, and a short distance further on one catches a glimpse of the white-walled chapel of St. Walhere. There is a story connected with this which runs as follows: A Vicar of Hastière, in ancient times, who happened to be the nephew of the pious Dean Walhère of Florennes, caused the latter great sorrow by the irregularity and immorality of his life. So much so, indeed, did he offend that, even in days not noted for great strictness in those matters, it was found necessary to severely reprimand the sinner. One day, the Dean, wishing to cross the Meuse from Hastière to the other side, entered a boat in which the Vicar was acting for the time as ferryman. Somewhat unwisely (knowing the disposition of his nephew), the Dean proceeded to exhort and admonish him. The latter, after listening for a few minutes to his relative with ill-disguised impatience and annoyance, smote the Dean on the head with the oar, and then cast his body into the river. The body, however, did not sink, as might have been expected, but kept on the surface, and drifted ashore just at the spot where the fountain of St. Walhère still bubbles forth. Next day, we are told, the body was claimed by the men of Bouvignes, who wished to give it honoured burial. But when the horses were attached to the cart in which the dead had been laid, the animals refused to move. At length, at the behest of a widow known for her piety, two young heifers were obtained and hitched to the cart, which was then drawn up the hillside to Bonair, where a chapel now stands dedicated to the saint, who is supposed (by the peasants) to especially look after the interests of sick cattle.

The two pleasantly situated villages of Hastière-Lavaux and Hastière-par-delà, which are surrounded by delightful scenery, are soon reached. They stand on either bank of the Meuse, and are connected by a three-span iron bridge.



Although Hastière-Lavaux, through which one passes to Givet, is the more important village, and by far the larger, all interested in fine churches should cross the bridge and visit Hastière-par-delà, where stands one of the finest Romanesque churches in the valley of the Meuse. It was formerly attached to an ancient priory dating from the eleventh century.

Hermeton-sur-Meuse is reached by a slight divergence from the main road, which forks soon after leaving Hastière and can afterwards be regained a little distance the other side of Hermeton, and the little place is well worth a passing visit. The valley of Hermeton, of which one gets a glimpse, is one of the most delightful in the district. About two miles after regaining the main road, we were stopped at the *douane* on the French frontier, which is at Heer-Agimont station on the railway. The proceedings are not very formidable for cyclists with a minimum of luggage, and therefore a minimum of "cover" in which to smuggle anything, and we were soon again on our way.

At length Givet comes in sight, divided into two, as is Dinant, by the Meuse; Givet St. Hilaire, lying on the left bank at the foot of the steep hill crowned by the fort of Charlemont, whilst Givet Notre Dame is situated on the opposite bank.

Givet is a brisk town of some 8,000 inhabitants, strongly fortified and picturesque, but possessing no buildings of any great interest or antiquity. The commercial, official, and residential portion of the city is that on the left bank; the industrial and manufacturing on the right.

The curious-looking church of St. Hilaire, built by the famous military engineer, Vauban, towards the end of the seventeenth century, has been immortalized by Victor Hugo in his "Letters." His description of the building, if not particularly flattering, is amusing, illuminating, and fairly accurate. Of it he writes: "The architect has taken the cap of a priest or lawyer, and on this square cap has erected a salad-bowl upside down; on the back of this, used as a platform, he has placed a sugar-basin; on this sugar-basin a bottle, with a sun-fish attached to the neck of the bottle by the lower vertical fin; and, finally, on the sun-fish a cock is spitted."

We found nothing much more of interest in Givet save

the monument to the composer Méhul, who wrote the famous "Chant du Départ," and a rather handsome fountain in the rococo style.

Less than fifty miles to the south-east of Givet lies Sedan of tragic memories. The way to that sad spot, which witnessed forty years ago the *débâcle* of French hopes, is a pleasant one, but it lies outside the scope of the present volume.

## CHAPTER VII

### BRUSSELS PAST AND PRESENT

**B**RUSSELS, which occupies an almost central position in Belgium, is pleasantly situated on the Senne, a tributary of the Dyle, much as is Paris upon the Seine. Several quarters of the city are at a considerable height above sea-level. The history of Brussels, like that of many another city of Northern Europe, is obscured by those mists of conflicting traditions and contradictory records which make the work of the historian so laborious and intricate. Even the origin of the name itself is uncertain, some authorities inclining to the belief that it was derived from the two words *broek*, or *bruk*, a marsh, and *sele*, or *sel*, a dwelling or manor—literally, a manor in the marsh. But be this as it may, we know that in those dim and mysterious bygone ages when, out of the warring of contending barbarous and semi-savage tribes, was gradually evolved the institutions and towns which ultimately took concrete form in the Netherlands, Brussels was gradually coming into being—a town of the Salic Franks, who for the greater part were the founders of the cities of the Province of Brabant, of which Brussels is the chief.

Of the great men and heroes whose lives were connected more or less intimately with the foundation of the city, we know very little. Some, indeed, are mere names handed down to us by tradition; others figure with a little more detail and clearness in the writings of the chroniclers of those early times.

One of the most treasured in the memories of the medieval inhabitants, and one which has a definite place amongst the saints and heroes of those far-distant days, is that of St. Hubert, the great hunter Bishop of Liège, from



about 707 to 727. He dwelt, we are told, in "a strong castle in the Forest of Soignes hard by Brussels, and when hunting there one day was confronted by a white stag, which bore gleaming between its horns a cross, emitting rays of light." This so impressed Hubert that he was converted to the Christian faith, and became fruitful in good works, so that by his ceaseless preaching and efforts, the whole of the inhabitants of Brabant at last became converted. The peasants who dwell in the forest of Soignes, to this day believe that it is under St. Hubert's especial protection; and some even assert that their forbears have seen the white stag, with the flashing emblem of the cross, in the more secluded dells and boscages. There is now, however, no trace remaining of Hubert's dwelling, but tradition asserts that in the royal park of Tervueren, the chapel known as St. Hubert's marks its site, and the curious may care to know that in the parish church of the village (which is a famous resort of artists) hangs an ancient hunting-horn of ivory said to have belonged to the saint.

Aldnilek the Fierce, ancestor of the great Charlemagne, Rombold, and Bavon, are little more than names—first of robber chiefs, or marauders, and then of saints, as some early missionary or other brought conversion from the evil of their ways to them. All are more or less connected with the district of which Brussels forms the centre.

The foundation of the city is generally supposed to have taken place in the sixth century, and the founder is by tradition supposed to have been St. Géry, Bishop of Cambrai, by many considered the St. Augustine of Belgium. It was on an island in the Senne, amid what must then have been extensive marshes, that the first dwellings were built. But from this time onward records are scanty concerning this village, and it is not until the tenth century that one finds an authentic mention of it. From a document of the reign of Otho the Great one learns that there was a church here. Seldom, indeed, in ancient times, was a group of houses placed at any spot without the accompaniment of a church, the symbol of some degree of law, order, and protection of the weak in those troublous times. And in the year 977, Duke Charles of Lorraine selected the village or townlet as his place of official residence, and shortly afterwards built a château on St. Géry's island.

The spot was not an unsuitable one, for the Senne, by its many windings and frequent floods, had in course of the centuries cut in the soft soil many marshy islets, which offered to settlers and wandering tribes alike good protection from wild beasts as well as from their human enemies.

In course of time the village St. Géry had founded grew into a town, and the inhabitants, after many struggles with the periodical floods to which the Senne was subject, commenced to build upon the higher land, a little distance from the banks of the river, which was also more healthy.

In the early part of the eleventh century the powerful Counts of Louvain, who had by then become the overlords of the country, and who afterwards, as we know, assumed the style or title of Dukes of Brabant, built a castle upon the height which commanded the valley of the Senne and the approach by water from the sea. It was under Duke Balderic that the first walled enclosure appears to have been built (though there is some evidence of a wall connecting the castle with the nucleus of the lower town at a somewhat earlier period than the beginning of the eleventh century), which reached a little beyond the site of the Church of St. Gudule, and, continuing to the Rue d'Assaut, afterwards turned towards the present Boulevard Anspach, and climbed up the site of the Rue des Alexiens by the Rue d'Or, ultimately finishing a little below the site of the present Rue Royale.

This wall was ultimately (about 1357) replaced by another having seven gates, and this was much strengthened during the first quarter of the sixteenth century, and till the nineteenth century enclosed Brussels proper.

Towards the middle of the eleventh century Henry III. built himself a "fine strong castle of great size and magnificence" on the site now occupied by the Place Royal and Royal Palace. Brussels from this period onward until the eighteenth century was usually the residence of the Sovereigns and of the Governors, who constantly changed with the varying fortunes of Brabant and the Netherlands.

The city has no very stirring or romantic history from the twelfth till the fourteenth century. The town continued to grow, with fluctuations caused by fire, flood, and pestilence, and by the commencement of the fourteenth century had become an important, and even prosperous place.

The fourteenth century, however, saw some stirring events during the reign of Duke Wencelas. Both in Louvain, the then capital of Brabant, and in Brussels, there was great discontent and animosity between the patricians and the plebeian classes. Neither were strong enough to openly attack one another, but there was a smouldering hostility, which it seems Duke Wencelas was unable to combat. On August 17, 1356, Louis de Maele, Count of Flanders, who had received encouragement from Wencelas' discontented patricians to invade Brabant, succeeded in defeating the Duke at Scheut, near Anderlecht, and in putting him to flight. After the battle, Louis entered Brussels almost without opposition, and it would appear that his claim to the Duchy of Brabant was speedily acknowledged by every town of any importance. The dislike of the nobles to Wencelas arose from his known sympathies with the lower classes. Their welcome to Louis de Maele arose from the fact that they knew him for a strong ruler and one who favoured the aristocracy.

Count Louis was not destined, however, to long enjoy his ill-gotten possession, for, as is so often the case in crises both national as well as municipal, the need produced the man. One Everard T'Serclaes, or Everard Nicholson in English, born in 1315, who was a patriot, a patrician, and a wealthy man, high in authority, and in the favour of the fugitive Duke Wencelas, took up the people's cause. He was, above all, a citizen of great integrity, and by the time that Wencelas had gathered a new force together at Maastricht, T'Serclaes had taken matters into his own hands, and had driven out Louis de Maele and his Flemings from Brussels. The English victory over the forces of the French King John at Poitiers had made such a scheme as that of T'Serclaes possible, for Louis de Maele's fortunes were bound up with those of France, and it was upon the French King that he had to rely to aid him to keep what he had taken.

On the dark and wet night of October 29, 1356, T'Serclaes, who had been for some time exiled at Maastricht, but had kept in touch with his companions in Brussels who were favourable to the cause of Duke Wencelas, came back to the city under cover of the Forest of Soignes. He made for a spot near his own home, where there happened to be neither moat, nor was the rampart high. No watch appears



to have been kept, and T'Serclaes speedily climbed over the wall. There was no one stirring in the streets or by-lanes of the city ; all was still, save for the sougning of the high wind and the splashing of the raindrops in the pools which lay on the unpaved road, or where the stone flags had been worn by many feet. But T'Serclaes' plans had been made beforehand with great care and daring. He knew he could count upon more than a mere handful of supporters, and relied upon the inestimable advantage of a night-surprise of the Flemings and their patrician aiders and abettors, who were sleeping unsuspectingly in their beds.

Within an hour of T'Serclaes' climbing over the wall of the city, at an agreed signal the watchword and battle-cry rang out in the deathly stillness of the night : " Brabant for the great Duke Wencelas !" and men came running to join T'Serclaes at the rallying-point agreed upon. Soon the number gathered thus together was considerable, and they swept on, with T'Serclaes at their head, into the Market Place. The golden lion standard of Brabant soon replaced that of the black lion of Flanders ; and, hearing the acclamations of the crowd cheering on T'Serclaes, the Flemish guard at length turned out to see what the disturbance was about. In the streets they found a cursing, furious mob (largely composed, let it be explained, of the rougher elements among the citizens, who had been drawn into the adventure by reason of their inherent love of turbulence, and the fact that they had everything to gain and not much to lose), and, only half-aroused from their interrupted slumbers, they were by no means fitted to comprehend the situation clearly. Seized with a panic, after a feeble attempt at contending with the forces of T'Serclaes, they fled, pursued by their fierce and relentless foes. So far as history goes, not one of the Flemish garrison escaped. Those who were not at once killed in their flight jumped off the high walls, fell into the canals or moat and were drowned, or were hunted out of their hiding-places at dawn and put to the sword. By sunrise Brussels was once more in the hands of Everard T'Serclaes and of the friends of Duke Wencelas, and within a week all the towns in the Duchy, with the one exception of Malines, had followed the example of Brussels, and the Flemish occupation of Brabant came to a sudden and ignominious end.

T'Serclaes, who had played so great a part in this brilliant achievement, was knighted, and managed for a long period to retain the confidence of the simple burghers as well as the tacit, if not active, approval of the patrician element. He succeeded ultimately, indeed, in obtaining the approval and goodwill of the very men—the patricians—against whose supposed interests he had successfully fought. He was chosen premier alderman of the city in 1365, and ten years later, when drastic reforms had been taken to prevent corruption, and when the magistracy became elective, he was again chosen. In the same year he represented the patricians of his native town in the National Assembly at Braine-l'Alleud, and was two years later, and again in 1382, elected premier alderman.

The citizens who had helped Duke Wencelas to regain his Duchy also had their reward, in having granted to them municipal representation. The trading companies or guilds were granted by charter an equal share in the government of Brussels. History tells us however, that this particular charter was speedily revoked by Wencelas, why, is wrapt in mystery.

T'Serclaes, the idol of the people, came in the end by a violent death. A dispute arose regarding the sale of a strip of land by the widowed Duchess Jeanne, who was impecunious, to one Sweder, a baron who had domains near Brussels. The Bruxellois were furious that any land over which the city held jurisdiction should be taken from them. T'Serclaes was chosen to defeat Sweder's proposal by an appeal to the Duchess. In this he succeeded, and thereby made a deadly enemy of the ambitious Sweder, who decided on his removal. So it came about that on the evening of March 26, when T'Serclaes, who had been on a visit to Lennick, a village quite close to the castle of Gaesbeke, where Sweder dwelt, was returning unaccompanied on his mule to Brussels he was set upon by two men, who had been hiding in wait for him behind a hedge. They pulled him from his mule, mutilated him atrociously—tearing out his tongue, cutting off his right foot, and slashing his body with their daggers or swords—and left him by the wayside. He was found by some peasants and carried to Brussels, where he died ten days later from his terrible wounds. He lies buried in the ancient church at Ternath, and on each

anniversary of his death a Requiem Mass is sung for the repose of the soul of him they called "the Saviour of Brussels."

Although the citizens of Brussels, some considerable number of the patricians, and the Duchess Jeanne set out to revenge T'Serclaes, and besieged Sweder's castle of Gaesbeke, they could not take it. At length Sweder's wife, Anne of Linange, made terms with the besiegers; offering to yield up the castle and let what might come to it, provided her life and those of its inhabitants, including the murderers of T'Serclaes—William of Cleves, a natural son of Sweder; and his chief steward, Melis Uytten-Enge—were spared. These terms were accepted by the besiegers, who just then were fearful of attack upon Brabant by Henry of Gelderland. Thus justice was in a measure defeated. The castle was burned, but Sweder and his wife were less than a year later restored to their possessions.

This story of T'Serclaes, stirring as it is, is but one of the many romantic incidents connected with the city of Brussels in the Middle Ages. One might fill a book with the others, but this one must suffice us as typical of the lawless times, and rapid changes of government and supremacy which marked that period when might was right, and he who could best take best held.

After Wencelas had regained his Duchy and Brussels, he commenced the ramparts which are represented as regards general area by the Boulevards of to-day. In consequence the history of the city for a considerable period was the quieter for the added security of stronger walls.

The great commercial and material prosperity of the place dates from the commencement of the rule of the House of Burgundy. It was then, in the fifteenth century, that the most beautiful of its many fine buildings were erected. The Church of St. Michael and St. Gudule has its great nave and towers dating from this period; the Hôtel de Ville, Notre Dame du Sablon, the Nassau Palace, the Palace of the Dukes of Brabant, and many other buildings were commenced then. Manufactures and commerce commenced to flourish, whilst the liberties of the municipality were extended considerably.

From now onward, indeed, Brussels was commonly esteemed the capital of the Belgian provinces, notwithstanding



the importance both of Antwerp and Ghent. About this time two parties came prominently into being, known by the somewhat clumsy titles of the "Lineages" and the "Nations." Otherwise, the Aristocracy and the Democracy. These during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were constantly at variance in their endeavours to assume control of municipal affairs, the people frequently taking up arms as a protest against the exercise of privileges by the patrician families. But by degrees the Guilds gained a great importance, as they increased in numbers and wealth with the industrial and commercial prosperity of the city.

The whole development of the municipal form of government, which was republican in sentiment if not in actual practice, was brought about by the struggles between two contending parties for the maintenance of municipal liberty, the imposition of taxes, and the checking of the privileges of the rich. Every now and again in reading the history of the Netherlands of this period, and of the various Duchies and Countships which comprised the greater area, one finds Sovereigns, Dukes, and Counts humbling themselves to their freedom-loving citizens when in need of hard cash to carry on their little wars, or to engage in the adventurous undertakings of greater sovereigns who were their suzerains, only when the immediate need for funds was past to revoke the charters granted, and take back some privilege which the burghers had bought.

It was undoubtedly under the rule of Charles V. that Brussels reached its zenith of ancient prosperity. Then, with the era of Philip II. of Spain, came a long period of bloodshed, persecution, and misery. The religious disputes and troubles afflicting the Netherlands had their effect upon the life, prosperity, and happiness of the Bruxellois. The whole country was running with blood, and ruin stalked through the land. But during this tragic period of Netherlands' history Brussels saw several glorious events, and did as a city more than one noble deed. It was in Brussels that the compromise of the nobles took place, after which those who were rebelling against the cruelties of the Inquisition were given the name of "Gueux," which had been bestowed upon them contemptuously by the Comte de Barlaimont.

The *Gueux*, or "Beggars," consisted of about 300

Protestant deputies of the Low Countries, who, headed by Henri de Brederode and Louis of Nassau, on April 5, 1566, petitioned Margaret of Parma, the then governor of the Low Countries, to abolish the Inquisition. Failing in this, the deputies at once assumed the sobriquet that had been bestowed upon them contemptuously as an honourable distinction, and commenced an organized resistance.

It was Brussels which led the revolt against the most bloodthirsty of the rulers sent to the Netherlands by Spain, the Duke of Alva, and successfully resisted the imposition of the notorious "vingtième denier" tax which it was sought to impose upon it. A tax which led ultimately to the revolt of the whole of the Belgian provinces.

The Brussels citizens of those days were born and bold fighters, and they resisted the great Alexander Farnese for five long years. The struggle was carried on with varying fortunes, but always with great courage and patriotism.

But ultimately weakness developed from within. The Iconoclasts—by which title some of the followers of the original *Gueux* became known—committed great excesses, which were not alone confined to the destruction of portions of the churches, throughout the country now known as Belgium, in the throwing down of images, and the spoliation of altars and other church furniture, but also led to the damage of public buildings and destruction of works of art. Then followed the division of the Walloon party, which separated themselves from the "League," or Royalist, faction numbering the principal families of the nobility. All of these things served to bring about the subjection once more of the country to the Spanish yoke, and finally to the yielding up of Brussels in 1585.

Brussels had once more fallen upon evil times. Persecutions again decimated many families of the citizens, skilled artisans were driven abroad, chiefly to England, and though, under the rule of Albert and Isabella, things were less unsettled and persecution less severe, during the feeble reigns of Philip IV. and Charles II. matters became worse from the merchants' point of view, and the continual wars with France had their effect upon the trade and commercial prosperity of Brussels as of other Belgian cities.

At the end of the seventeenth century, in 1695, whilst Louis XIV. was on the French throne, the city was nearly

destroyed by the inexcusable and useless bombardment to which the French, under the Marshal Villeroi, subjected it. It was set on fire in many places, and only the most strenuous efforts of the citizens saved it from total destruction. How great was the damage done can only be realized by comparison of the ancient buildings existing in the city a few years after with those just prior to the bombardment. This can be done by means of old maps, plans, and engravings.

But the Bruxellois did not waste much time in lament over their battered city. They set to work with commendable promptitude to rebuild, and in a measure reconstruct the ruined and damaged buildings. In less than five years, we are told, scarcely a trace of the bombardment remained, although, of course, the burned and wrecked buildings were not many of them yet replaced.

Unfortunately for the progress of the city, the seventeenth century closed in anarchy and war. There was trouble with France and with Holland (from which latter the Belgian provinces, chiefly on account of the difference in religion, wished to separate), and the end only came to the struggle by the assigning of Belgium, as we now know it, to Austria by the Peace of Ryswick on September 20, 1697.

The Governor appointed, the Marquis de Prie, was a Duke of Alva in little. He attempted to trample out all desire upon the part of the citizens of Brussels to exercise and retain their privileges, and to resist any encroachment upon the power to govern themselves, which they had won at such cost during the passage of the centuries. Once more the Bruxellois rebelled, and a simple chairmaker, named Anneessens, led a revolt, but paid with his life for his temerity.

Maria Theresa, through her Stadtholder, Duke Charles of Lorraine, for a period of thirty-six years, from 1744-80, with a short break in the continuity, introduced a much milder and more beneficent rule. Duke Charles soon became popular, as he was a ruler after the citizen's own hearts, strong without arrogance or cruelty, fatherly in his relations with the good people of Brussels, and earnest in his endeavour to reorganize the public services and to foster commerce. The government of the Duke was, however, brought to an unfortunate end by the surrender of the city



to the French under Maurice de Saxe, on February 28, 1746. A surrender which was disgraceful and almost incomprehensible, as the Allies (the Austrians, English, and Dutch) struck not a blow in defence of the city. The French occupation lasted until the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle on October 7, 1748, when the city reverted again to Austria.

The time of peace which followed may be said to have constituted one of the happiest and most prosperous periods of the city's history. Both arts and commerce again flourished, and industries increased. New buildings were erected, new quarters laid out, fine streets constructed. But the spirit of the Corporations or Guilds became weakened, and even the "Serments," or bodies of citizen soldiers, which consisted of the "Grand Serment" of cross-bowmen, the "Petit Serment" of cross-bowmen, the arquebusiers, the archers, and lastly, the swordsmen or pikemen, lost much of their power and gradually became disorganized. Possibly, too, because of long years of peace, the Bruxellois lost the proud spirit of independence that formerly had caused them so often to be thorns in the sides of rulers who attempted to curtail their privileges.

The want of tact and imprudence of Joseph II., however, served to arouse the old spirit of revolt in the Bruxellois and Belgians generally, with a result that there was a rising, known as the Brabantine Revolution, started and controlled by the lawyers Henri Van der Noot, François Vonck, and Van Eupen, Grand Plenipotentiary. The result was the ultimate defeat of Joseph's party and supporters. However, the tables were turned within a year owing to internal dissensions amongst the "National" party, and the Austrians again took possession.

Belgium, then, for a period of many years became the shuttlecock of French and Austrian pretensions. It was taken by both nations in turn; and then, after the Battle of Fleurus on June 26, 1794, the Austrians were driven out for ever, and the French once more becoming possessors, Brussels, the Capital of the Low Countries, was made the chief town of the department of the Dyle in the scheme of the new French division of the country.

During the succeeding years before the fall of Napoleon the city, in which the Great Emperor stayed at Laeken several times for short periods, had an untroubled and even

somewhat stagnant existence. But by the Treaty of Vienna, on September 28, 1814, when, as we have already seen, the erstwhile Austrian possessions and the Northern Provinces of the Low Countries were united so as to form the Kingdom of the Netherlands, under the rule of William of Orange, the prosperity and population of Brussels, the size of which had greatly decreased under the French Empire, improved. Then came the "National" movement and Revolution of 1830, which ultimately led to the separation of Belgium from Holland.

On this occasion the people were firmly united, realizing to the full the truth of the motto that was afterwards to be adopted as the national one: *L'Union fait la Force*.

Unlike various other revolts and revolutions when powerful members of the nobility and large sections of the clergy had taken the side of the foreigners or invaders, that of 1830 numbered amongst its originators and supporters the nobility as a whole, represented by the members of many illustrious families, amongst them Felix de Mérode and the Baron d'Hoogvorst; the burghers by Charles Rogier, Van de Weyer, Van der Linden, Joly, Kessels, and others equally noted; and the people by numberless artisans and soldiers, amongst the latter the famous Charlier with the wooden leg, who bombarded the Dutch garrison with a small cannon, and killed and wounded several hundred.

The chief fighting of the "Four Days" of September 23rd, 24th, 25th, and 26th centred round the Park. The patriots occupied the Hôtel Belle Vue, firing from the windows upon the Dutch, who were entrenched in the Park itself, whilst Charlier and his single cannon took up a position near by. Some of the houses in the Rue Royale were also occupied by the patriots as far as the Montagne du Parc, where another barricade was thrown up.

The first shots were fired in the neighbourhood of the old Porte de Schaerbeek. Soon, gaining courage by reason of their successes, the Revolutionaries forced their way into the Park, and engaged in a fierce hand-to-hand encounter with the Dutch troops. Although during the whole of the four days the fighting was fierce, it had its comic as well as its tragic side and interludes. For example, it was the practice of the combatants to fight all the morning till noon, and then adjourn for lunch, the Belgians leaving the

battlefield to go home, the Dutch making themselves as comfortable as they could where they were entrenched. After *déjeuner* the Revolutionaries returned to the attack, and the fight recommenced !

The same thing happened in the evening when the dinner or supper hour arrived.

On the night of September 26 the Dutch quietly crept away, and when the Revolutionaries came to renew the battle on the 27th they found, much to their astonishment, the Park evacuated and enemy gone.

Brussels was free.

We have already seen, in our introductory chapters, how the country ultimately became settled under the rule of Leopold I., Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and there is for this reason no need to refer further to the history of Brussels in more modern times.

From the commencement of the reign of Leopold I. the city began rapidly to recover its lost position as one of the great trading and commercial centres of Northern Europe. It is to-day beautiful, prosperous, and enterprising, endowed with a great historic past, and the promise of a great commercial future.

The verdict that one is likely to pass upon Brussels, the history of which we have just briefly considered, at first sight as one approaches it and travels, as we did, into its heart from Namur by way of the wide, bustling Boulevard du Midi, and thence along the quieter and smarter Boulevards du Hainaut and Anspach, can be but confirmed by a lengthened stay. We have seen Brussels under various conditions of social life, and at different seasons of the year, and it still remains to us not alone (as it undoubtedly is) a storehouse of Art and antiquarian treasures, but a picturesque and delightful city ; not merely "*une petite Paris*," but a charming capital with some very distinctive features.

The whole of Brussels strikes one as cleaner than the whole of Paris, just as the whole of Paris must appear, at least to the casual observer, as more gay and less serious, from a commercial point of view, than Brussels. It may be quite true, as a famous Frenchman recently said, "There exists no necessity to do one's business with a solemn face," but it is with concentration and not with sombreness that the Bruxellois goes about his work, earning those hours



of recreation in which he will "let himself go" with the best.

Certainly this ancient capital of the Province of Brabant, containing nowadays with its suburbs a population of upwards of 600,000, which has quadrupled in sixty years, has come to take its place amongst the most beautiful and charming capital cities of Europe. It is undoubtedly healthy, and there is an engaging air about Brussels which soon impresses itself upon the foreign visitor. Added to all its many attractions of interesting museums—the homes of wonderful and in some cases unrivalled collections of works of art—and of historical associations with the past, it possesses the charm of being modern in the best sense and of being a place where one may find much that is finest in Art and Music. As a home of fashion it bids fair some day to rival Paris herself, and the shops of the Montagne de la Cour, Boulevard Anspach, and contiguous streets are scarcely less luxurious or exclusive than those of the Rue de la Paix or Boulevard des Italiens in the French capital.

Brussels is a city of shady boulevards, open spaces, and pleasant parks as is Paris; and the beautiful Bois de la Cambre on its outskirts compares very favourably with the world-renowned Bois de Boulogne as regards rural charm and picturesqueness.

One impression that Brussels is almost certain to make upon the visitor is its compactness. Its population, including the outskirts, is nowadays rather over 600,000; but it is almost impossible to realize that nearly one-eleventh of the whole population of Belgium is concentrated in this one city, or, as might be said, in Greater Brussels. Perhaps the real reason of this apparent lack of size is because there are in reality two cities, Brussels *interieur* and Brussels *exterieur*. The one with a population of about 225,000; the latter with one of about 375,000. It is with the former, of course, that the tourist and casual visitor are chiefly concerned.

The outlying suburbs are, however, connected with the city proper by a splendid system of steam, electric, and other trams. In fact, it may be said that Brussels is in a sense surrounded by a group of small towns, which though forming part of the great city are yet independent, and are governed very much like the various boroughs which make up Greater London. Curhegem, St. Gilles, Ixelles, St.

Josse Ten Noode, Molenbeek St. Jean, and Schaerbeek, still further out, are all in a sense separate towns, seldom visited by, and indeed almost unknown to, the tourist.

The most fashionable quarters for residences of the wealthy classes are the broad and beautiful Avenue Louise and the streets and avenues of the Quartier Leopold. They in a sense correspond to the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, Avenue des Champs Élysée, and Boulevard St. Germain of Paris.

There is another feature, too, that modern Brussels has in common with Paris of the immediate past and of to-day. It is being "Haussmannized," and the older and more quaint and interesting portions of the city (as has been, and is, the case in Paris) are gradually but surely disappearing to make way for the onward march of progress and expansion. Almost on every hand, and especially in the Porte de Namur quarter, old buildings are constantly falling victims to the "house-breaker," and new, in the shape of handsome mansions and lofty blocks of flats, are arising from their ashes.

The last thirty—even twenty—years have seen many changes. During that period the sluggish little River Senne, which once meandered through the city, and upon whose banks stood many fine and picturesque old houses and buildings of past ages, has been arched over, and the fine Boulevard of the same name, and those of Hainaut and Anspach, have been built above its imprisoned waters. The higher portions of the city are undeniably healthy, and the climate of Brussels is less subject to extreme changes than that of Paris. It is not unbearably cold in winter, and though hot in summer, is not so, we think, airless as either Paris or London, a fact accounted for by reason of its many open spaces, its height above sea-level, and comparative nearness to the North Sea.

The social life of Brussels is not unlike that of Paris and other large towns of France and Eastern Germany, but it differs in some respects from both. It is less Gallic and pleasure-loving than the former, and more so than the latter. The great stolidity of German life is in a measure lacking, and there is more of the domestic life than in Paris, although the multiplication of flats and the consequent abandonment of the individual home cannot in the long run fail, we

think, to have a detrimental effect upon the domestic life of the family.

The ambition of the inhabitants of Brussels, whether they be dwellers in the fashionable quarters of the Avenue Louise, Quartier Leopold, or bourgeois of the Midi, Porte de Namur, or other similar quarters, is to become the proprietors and owners of their houses. The Belgians, as a nation, appear to regard the payment of rent as so much loss of money which could be better and more profitably employed, and the money to purchase a dwelling, small or large, is thought the best kind of *dot* that a would-be bride can possess and bring to her future husband. It is largely because of this desire to own their own houses that the latter are built so very much alike, a feature that must very soon strike the stranger to the city. This peculiarity does not, of course, apply to the fine mansions and villas of the more wealthy classes, but to the dwellings which every year are being erected in greater numbers in the by-streets and outlying districts, and in the quarters within the city, where the older dwellings, which possess more distinctive features, are being pulled down to make room for lofty, narrow houses, which look almost as though they had been sliced off a mile or so and made in one mould. The modern architecture of private dwellings in Brussels is not, it will have been gathered from the preceding remarks, of a very diversified, original, or artistic character. Nor do architects exercise much ingenuity in preparing their designs. House property is, generally speaking, a good investment, the cost being much as with us. A well-built house containing seven or eight rooms, with the usual bathroom and other offices, standing on a plot of freehold land, can be bought in one of the most popular suburbs, such as St. Gilles, for about 25,000 francs, or say £1,000, and a similar house a mile or two further out can be obtained for half that sum.

In connection with the purchase of house property in Belgium, there is a tax of no less than 10 per cent. (a portion of which goes direct to the State) payable to the Commune in which the property is situated, on completion of the purchase. After having paid this tax, the happy proprietor is, to a large extent, relieved of further annual payments. The Communal taxes are inconsiderable, and in many cases (a friend who has long resided in Brussels in-



formed us) they do not exceed 6 per cent. of the estimated rent, which is usually about an eleventh of the purchase price. The reason—or, at least, one of the reasons—for the popularity of the Belgian capital as a place of residence with English and other foreigners will be easily understood. A further sum of from 8 to 10 per cent., the same informant stated, will pay for the Communal supply of both gas and water. It will be admitted that the city has not without some cause been described as the “paradise of the small householder and owner of middle-class residential property.” It is not difficult for most thrifty middle and lower middle-class Belgians to acquire their own houses, and to live in dwellings of quite an imposing type on very small incomes.

It must, however, be said that the middle and upper middle-class Belgians are not guiltless of a love of display, which cannot altogether be classed with that, on the whole, admirable virtue of being “house proud.” The outside of the residences of many Belgians of the social position we have referred to is often an unreliable indication of their material prosperity and the inside comfort of the dwellings. Often the apparently luxurious villa will, upon inspection, prove but poorly, and even scantily, furnished, and the “show” is mostly on the outside. This, however, can scarcely be called a national characteristic. The people of other lands exhibit a like failing, although we must admit that with Belgians of the lower middle and middle class it is very frequently obvious.

There is one other good resulting from the ownership of the house. The Belgians enjoy a well-deserved fame for taste in art and decoration, and the well-to-do spend more lavishly than do our own countrymen of a similar class upon the furnishing and decoration of their houses, and upon the acquisition of bric-à-brac and pictures. The furniture, when this can be afforded, is always good and of a substantial nature, much more so, our observation led us to think, than is the case in most English homes of a like character. Another feature of the Belgian home of the bourgeois class is the almost invariable presence of “show” rooms. In these are gathered together all the treasures of art or furniture the family possess, and in the case of even people of moderate means considerable sums of money are locked up in these things and bric-à-brac. No one who has become

personally familiar with the homes of the well-to-do Brussels bourgeoisie can have failed to have noticed the fact that most of the reception rooms have an appearance—nay, a very atmosphere—of disuse. In Belgium to-day survives just that custom of non-use of the better rooms of the house in middle-class and trading families which was so frequent in those of similar classes in England during Early and Mid-Victorian days.

It is not easy for the stranger to gain an insight of the real domestic life or apartments of the Belgian bourgeois. A visitor will be entertained most hospitably (if occasion require or offer) in the show-rooms; he will see the members of the family in their best clothes, and with the manners of ceremony, but he will seldom penetrate into the real home, the “common room,” the “undress” life of the family, even though he may be a lodger in the house, or a fairly intimate acquaintance.

The daily life of the family in Brussels, which is in a large measure typical of all other large and small towns, commences early. Rising at seven, or even earlier, in summer, the whole family will have finished their first and light breakfast by eight o'clock, and much of the day's marketing will also have been done. At noon, all the offices and many of the shops are closed for the mid-day meal, and the restaurants and creameries of all grades are crowded with hungry customers, whilst the more domestic and leisured principals of businesses and head-clerks—many of them hurry off home to snatch a well-earned meal in the family circle. This mid-day dinner is the most important meal of the day, unlike the general custom of Paris, where most people of the upper, upper middle, and even middle, classes make their evening repast the principal one—*souper*, on the other hand, having the general character of the Parisian *déjeuner à la fourchette*, or lunch.

The citizens of Brussels are, as we have said, early risers, and they go to bed at an hour well in advance of their fellow-citizens of Paris. By half-past nine or ten (in thousands of houses even earlier) lights will be out on five nights out of seven. Entertainments, save at the few night cafés, close early, and Brussels is, for the greater part, except as regards fashionable society folk in the season, slumbering long before eleven.

The Belgian is not a great player of indoor games, or, at all events, is not inclined to sit up much past the usual hour of retiring to play them, though cards, dominoes, and chess are popular. Also, broadly speaking, he is not a great reader; nor are his wife and the younger members of his family. The daily paper and a few comic weeklies of native, French, or German origin satisfy the desires of most men of the bourgeoisie as regards recreation and information. Occasionally they may read a travel-book (if they are merchants interested in any foreign commodity) or a novel which has made a stir, but to stay up of a night to read either would not suggest itself to the mind of the average Belgian. He likes his repose far more than either improving his mind or exercising it by the romantic, tragic, or sentimental adventures of characters in fiction.

Because, doubtless, of this habit of early rising and early retiring to well-earned rest, the evening life of Brussels is that which least entitles it to be called a "little Paris." It is distinctly dull when compared with that of the French capital. There are comparatively few good restaurants which are open, or, perhaps we should say, largely patronized, after eight or nine o'clock, and by half-past ten the chief streets and boulevards assume a decidedly deserted appearance, very greatly in contrast with those of Paris.

But if its life, on the whole, is less fascinating and brilliant than that of the French capital, Brussels can compare very favourably with it as regards its splendid streets, open spaces, charming surroundings, fine and historic buildings, museums and art collections, and the many and excellent facilities which the city possesses for getting from one quarter to another, and from the centre to the suburbs.

Of its fine buildings, none excels the Hôtel de Ville, which is certainly one of the most interesting and beautiful buildings of its kind in Belgium. It is well placed on one of the finest medieval squares in Europe, and is surrounded by quaint and historic houses. On this Grande Place many tragedies have from time to time been enacted, and some of the most ferocious acts of the inhuman Alva performed. In the spring of the terrible year 1568 no less than twenty-five Flemish nobles were executed here, and in the June of the same year the patriots Lamoral, Count Egmont, Philip de Montmorency, and Count Hoorn were put to death.





GRANDE PLACE AND HÔTEL DE VILLE, BRUSSELS



This atrocious deed is commemorated by a fountain with statues of the heroes, placed in front of the Maison du Roi, from a window of which the Duke of Alva watched his orders carried out.

This most beautiful Hôtel de Ville, with its Late Gothic façade approaching the Renaissance period nearly 200 feet in length, and with a beautiful and elegant central tower 370 feet in height, was commenced, according to a well-known authority,\* either in 1401 or 1402, the eastern wing, or left-hand portion as one faces it across the Place, having been the first part to be commenced, the western half of the façade not having been begun until 1444. The later additions formed the quadrangle. The building of the western wing was undertaken by Charles, son of Philippe le Bon, known then as "*jonghe heer van Sarlot*," and afterwards as Charles the Bold—on March 4 of the year we have just mentioned. The name of the architect of this fine and gracious building has not been handed down to us, although it is supposed that his name was Jacob van Thienen; but that of the builder of the spire has. He was one Jan van Ruysbroek, and the tower was completed in 1454. The wing of the building, which stands in the Rue Tête d'Or, was not commenced until later than the dates we have mentioned, and was not probably finished until the end of the fifteenth century. The side of the open square which lies parallel to the façade was the work of the sixteenth century, and, having been greatly damaged—as was also the portion in the Rue Tête d'Or during Marshal Villeroi's bombardment of the city in 1695, was reconstructed and rebuilt between the years 1707 and 1717. In fact, after the cannonading little more than the spire and the outer walls of its two wings remained standing of the Hôtel de Ville, and most of the ancient guild houses were in ruins.

There are numerous niches in the façade and other sides of the building. The first niche in the tower holds a statue of its builder, Jan van Ruysbroek. It is quite possible that many of the façade niches were never intended to contain statuary, only to serve as ornaments, and to break up the architecture. But, be this as it may, most of the ancient figures, which at one time were undoubtedly numerous, were ruined by the French Republican forces in 1793, and the

\* M. Schayes.



many modern statues of the Dukes of Brabant and historical and other celebrities which have taken their place, appear to overcrowd and overload the front.

The spire, which is crowned by a colossal gilded figure of the archangel St. Michael overcoming the Devil, was placed there first in 1454, and the original was the work of Martin van Rode, but it has been several times damaged, and several times renewed and regilded, on the last occasion in 1897. It will be noted by the critical that the spire and belfry, though nominally, is not actually, in the centre of the façade. There is an unfounded tradition—dying out nowadays, we believe—that Van Ruysbroek, the designer, on finding out this discrepancy, hanged himself from the tower.

The two handsome fountains in the courtyard are emblematic of the two rivers the Scheldt and the Maas. The figures ornamenting them are those of river-gods.

The interior of the building is of great interest. In the entrance corridor are several large paintings by Joseph Stallaërt of Merchtem, one of which should be especially noticed for its subject, the "Death of Everard T'Serclaes," one of the most popular citizen-heroes in the history of Brussels. The portraits in the vestibule of the first floor are all comparatively modern; among them are those of the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, Charles II. of Spain, Francis II., and Joseph II. The lavish and elaborate decorations of the handsome *Salle du Conseil Communal* are so beautiful and ornate as to remind one of those of some of the more noted Venetian palaces. The ceiling decoration, by Victor Janssens, dates from the early part of the eighteenth century, and has for its subject the Gods on Olympus. It is chiefly noticeable for the remarkable effectiveness of its perspective. There are also some fine pieces of tapestry on the walls by Henri Reydam and Urbain Leyniers, the subjects of which are "The Abdication of Charles V.," "The Coronation of the Emperor Charles VI. at Aix-la-Chapelle," and "The Entry of Philippe le Bon, Duke of Burgundy, into Brussels."

Scarcely a room of this beautiful and historic building but contains some treasure of art which tempts not alone the student, but even the casual visitor, to linger. In the *Salle Maximilian*, to our mind the subject of surpassing interest is the triptych of an unknown Belgian artist of the

fifteenth century, found in Italy, and acquired only a few years ago. It depicts scenes from the life of the Virgin, and is of great interest to all who are versed in Flemish Art, and its development from early times until its zenith. Most of the other rooms, including the large *Salle Gothique*, or *Salle des Fêtes*, which is adorned with some very fine oak carving (modern) in the Gothic Style, contain tapestries, woven at Malines, in frank and not unsuccessful imitation of the Gobelins work, are paintings of considerable interest and merit, but most are comparatively, or quite, modern, and call for no detailed description. Interesting as are the Council Chamber, in which many historic scenes have been enacted in the past, and the *Salle de College*, in which the provisional Government held its sitting after the Revolution of 1830, the almost complete modernization of all the rooms has robbed them of much of the charm of antiquity.

It may, we think after considerable experience, be safely said that no Grand Place in Northern Europe is so rich in ancient and historic houses as that of Brussels, though most of them are careful restorations, according to the old plans, of the Guild Houses damaged or destroyed by Villeroi's cannonade. Opposite the Hôtel de Ville stands the famous *Maison du Roi*, or Broodhuis (Bread House), on the site of an eleventh-century building, occupied as a residence towards the middle of the twelfth century by Pope Innocent II. and St. Bernard. The present building dates from 1514 onwards for a period of about ten years, and the style of its architecture is largely transition from the Late Gothic to the Renaissance. It was much injured by Villeroi's bombardment (as were, indeed, most of the other houses in the Grand Place and neighbourhood), and was restored in 1763. It was practically rebuilt rather more than a century later according to the original plan, and was, about 1896, taken over by the municipal authorities. The *Musée Communal* is now housed there. It contains a few things of interest, historically and artistically. The paintings are mostly modern, and many are of doubtful origin. It was in this house that Egmont and Hoorn spent the night preceding their execution; and, according to tradition, it was from one of the centre windows of the second floor that they stepped forth and reached the block, by means of a raised scaffolding which had been erected to prevent the

necessity of the popular heroes descending amongst the populace, with the risk of a rescue.

Most of the other Guild Houses, which form so picturesque and interesting a feature of this fine square, date from the period immediately following the useless and vandalistic bombardment by the French—that is to say, they were erected, or practically rebuilt, at the end of the seventeenth or during the early years of the eighteenth century, when the municipality offered prizes to the Guilds most handsomely restoring the shattered buildings. The first award, it is said, was given to the house known as “*Les Deux Nègres*,” at the corner of the *Rue de la Colline*.

Many of the houses are richly ornamented with gilding, and one of the quaintest is the “*Frégate*,” or “*Hall of the Sea Captains*,” the gable of which has been constructed to resemble the stern of a large vessel of the seventeenth century. Among others which deserve notice and mention are the “*Hôtel des Brasseurs*,” or “*Brewers’ Hall*,” dating from the middle of the eighteenth century, on the gable of which is an equestrian statue of Charles of Lorraine. At the corner of the *Rue au Beurre* stands the house known commonly as “*Le Roi d’Espagne*,” or “*Hall of the Bakers*,” a fine new building, reconstructed after the ancient plans as recently as 1902. The “*Maison de la Louve*,” or “*Archers’ Hall*,” derives its distinguishing name from the group of Romulus and Remus with the she-wolf, the gable being adorned with a gilt phoenix. Of the really ancient houses, the most interesting is that known as the “*Pigeon*,” or “*Hall of the Painters*,” standing on the north-east side of the *Place*. It was erected in 1537, and fortunately escaped any serious damage during the bombardment.

These are, after all, but a selection of the picturesque buildings with their lavish exterior decoration and gilding which give such a medieval atmosphere and appearance to this historic spot. All of them are worth the careful study of students and serious visitors.

Few tourists, we imagine, from the crowds we have seen and what we have been told by Belgian friends, fail to go to the back of the *Hôtel de Ville* in search of the famous bronze “*Mannikin*” Fountain of Duquesnoy. The figure of the “*mannikin*” is of greater artistic merit than might be supposed. It is a popular idol, immensely beloved by



the lower classes, who deck it with flowers and ribbons on gala occasions when it is also dressed up in the clothes which are kept in the Museum of the *Maison du Roi*. The elasticity of the "mannikin's" political sympathies would do credit to an American politician. They change with the necessities of the time and popular favour. He has worn the white cockade in 1747, when Louis XV. captured the city; he was decked out in the national colours during the Brabantine Revolution of 1789; and during the occupation of the French in 1793 in the tricolour. Then when Brussels became Dutch this "mannikin" put on the colours of the House of William of Orange, the then ruler of the joint kingdoms of Flanders and the Netherlands. Lastly, in 1830, when the Belgians, discontented with forming a portion of the Netherlands, started the successful revolution in Brussels for the purpose of expelling the Dutch garrison, he put on the blouse of the Revolutionary Nationalists. There is a story—we know of no evidence, however, to prove its authenticity—that Louis XV. when in Brussels was so taken with the little man that he decorated him with the cross of the Order of St. Louis!

This quaint figure has a legend attached to it that no conqueror of the city who succeeds in carrying it off will long retain it. Certain it is that none hitherto has; for, although stolen in turn by the citizens of Antwerp, by the English after the battle of Fontenoy, by the French under Louis XV., and by the English a short period later, and it is said also by the Dutch, it has always returned to enjoy the honours, pensions, and admiration of the good citizens of Brussels.

The Grande Place, around and in which so much of the municipal and commercial life of the past has centred, and still centres to-day, has more than once been the scene of historic and splendid pageants. It was here in 1428 that the Duke of Burgundy was entertained by his cousin the Duke Philip at a great tournament, "which lasted (we are told) three days with much skilful jousting and merriment of gallant knights and fair ladies."

An old chronicler adds that there were "seven or eight score helmets in the Place, and crowds of ladies and damsels richly dressed in the fashions of the country." The sword of honour for the best jousting was won by Lord de Croy.

The Cathedral at Brussels is dedicated jointly to Ste. Gudule and St. Michael. The former is one of the luckiest saints in that respect, as probably but for this dedication she would have remained amongst the many rather obscure saints of the early periods of Christianity. She was a grand-niece of Pepin of Landen, a kinsman of Charlemagne, a daughter of Ste. Amalberga, and was educated by Ste. Gertrude, her godmother, at Nivelles. Few facts concerning her have come down to us. The only one popularly known is that Gudule was an early riser in order to attend prayers at a distant church, to which on dark mornings she had to guide herself by means of a lantern. One morning, however, so the legend goes, "the Devil, always wishful to prevent saints, and to disturb the godly," caused her lantern to go out. But upon Ste. Gudule falling upon her knees in prayer the lantern was miraculously relit, "which happened as often as the Devil in his malignity extinguished it." It is for this reason that the saint is invariably shown carrying a lantern in her hand, often, too, with the figure of the Devil beside her in the act of blowing out the light. Ste. Gudule died in the year 712. In the tenth century her body was brought from Morseel to Brussels. It was not, however, until the year 1047 that Lambert, Count of Louvain, commenced to build a church on the present site above the body of the saint, which still reposes in the Church of Ste. Gudule of to-day which in the year 1220 took the place of the small original church.

It is to this church that most visitors to Brussels first wend their way after visiting the Grande Place and its delightful Flower Market, which is gay with blossoms on most days of the week all the year round. The natural situation of the church is a fine one, which was made the most of by its architects and builders of long ago. Standing, as it does, on the side of a hill reached from the Grande Place by the fine Rue de la Montagne and short, steep Rue Ste. Gudule, it stands overlooking the city with its two fine twin western towers dominating the neighbouring streets. These towers have appeared to us when viewed up the Rue Ste. Gudule and other streets leading up from the lower town to the church, generally to be veiled by a mystic grey or ambient haze, and to gain much in impressiveness and

grandeur from the *coup d'œil* one obtains of them framed, as it were, in the end of the rising street.

The double flight of steps by which they are approached, and the platform upon which they stand, add much to the effect of their solid and exquisitely designed massiveness. Formerly—we are speaking of about half a century ago—the church, like so many others in Belgium, and in Normandy in particular, was masked and spoiled in its effectiveness by encroaching houses. Fortunately, these have, nowadays, been cleared away, and Ste. Gudule stands out the dominant note of this portion of the city—beautiful and serene. The fine towers, dating from 1518,\* which are 226 feet in height, are supposed by some to have been originally furnished with elegant spires, but this appears doubtful, as there is no real evidence of it. M. Schayes, however, inclines to the belief that they were once united by a wide flat arch of great boldness, and if this was the case, the appearance of the western end of the church must have resembled that of Notre Dame at Mantes. There is a doorway in the front of each tower opening into the aisles, and in the centre of the façade is a double doorway dating from the year 1518, leading into the fine and impressive nave. There are lancet arches above all the doorways; two are coupled, and have above them a window, and the front is adorned by a gable with a very beautiful parapet.

The south side of the church is particularly well worth study, by reason of the great picturesqueness and charm which is given it by the range of side chapels. They and their acute gables greatly add to the richness of effect. Each has a gable with crocketed mouldings of elegant design; bold flying buttresses and pinnacles and gargoyles of elegant or fantastic shape adding their quota of elegance.

This portion of the church was finished at a comparatively late period, but probably followed an earlier design. The front of the south transept, which dates from about 1273, is rather poor, notwithstanding the fact that it has a good porch attached to it, added about the end of the fifteenth century. The other end of the transept was completed about the same time as the towers. The western windows of the choir, and the severely designed buttresses between them, give an impressive effect to this portion of the church

\* Some authorities give the date as the end of the fifteenth century.



which dates from the same period as the south end of the transept. It should be noticed that the tracery in the windows, though good of its kind, is later in date. The exterior of the eastern end is very beautiful, but the charming general effect is somewhat spoiled by the presence of the ugly little hexagonal chapel of St. Mary Magdalene, dating from the last half of the seventeenth century.

It is impossible to note all the admirable details of the exterior of this fine church, but the picturesque little tabernacles which surmount the double flying buttresses, the canopy of tracery which is above the heads of the windows, and the good pierced work should have special attention given to them.

The immense lateral chapels of the choir are late additions. That on the north is dedicated to the *St. Sacrement des Miracles*. It was so dedicated to commemorate the events which followed the stealing, by a Jew, of some wafers of the Host.

The legend of the Miraculous Wafers is probably one of quite a number of similar stories invented by the monks and priests for the purpose of influencing the superstitious, and may very possibly also have its origin in the hatred and contempt in which the Jews of that period were held. Any accusation which would enable the populace to attack the latter and confiscate their goods being eagerly seized upon.

The story goes that a Jew by the name of Jonathan, residing in the little town of Enghien in the year 1369, prevailed upon one of his fellow Jews, named John of Louvain, who was a sham convert to Christianity, to steal for him some of the consecrated wafers used in the service of the Mass. At first, we are told, John of Louvain refused to be a party to this crime, but a promise of sixty gold angels appears to have ultimately overcome his fears and scruples, with the result that one dark night in the month of October of the year we have named, he broke into the Church of Ste. Catherine, Brussels, and stole the ciborium containing the wafers, the number of which is variously stated to have been from three to sixteen.

Soon afterwards, it appears, the instigator of this sacrilege was murdered in his own garden, and his wife removed to Brussels, carrying with her the stolen wafers. On Good Friday a number of Jews gathered together in their

synagogue, which then stood near the Hôtel Dieu, and the wafers having been produced they were thrown upon the table and subjected to all the insults which the Jewish mind could conceive. Finally, some of those present stabbed them with their knives, when they were horror-struck to see drops of blood oozing from them. Many, we are told, of the impious Jews fell to the floor in fits brought about by this extraordinary miracle. The perpetrators of this sacrilege were ultimately discovered by means of a second miracle, and on being confronted with witnesses confessed what they had done. Another version of the story, however, states that they were cruelly tortured to extort a confession, and afterwards were burned alive, their goods confiscated, and all the Jews in Brussels banished outside the Province of Brabant.

This gruesome medieval legend is illustrated in the large stained glass windows of the chapel, which also contain portraits of the donors, King John III. of Portugal, Louis of Hungary, Francis I. of France, Ferdinand of Austria, and their wives and patron saints.

The wafers are said to be still preserved in the chapel, and are carried in procession on the Sunday which follows July 15.

The end window of the chapel represents the Adoration of the Holy Sacrament and of the slain Lamb. The composition of the subject strongly suggests that of the Van Dyck in the Cathedral at Ghent.

It cannot be said that the interior of Ste. Gudule's as a whole comes up to the expectations, which are aroused by the impressive, and from many points beautiful, exterior. But it is not without nobility, notwithstanding the paint, and none too wise restoration in places. The spacious effect which at once strikes one is largely owing to the absence of the commonplace seventeenth or eighteenth century rood-screen and rococo altar-piece which so frequently disfigure Belgian churches. The stained glass of Ste. Gudule is almost world-famed, although none (with the possible exception of a few fragments here and there) is medieval. The most beautiful and successful windows date from the seventeenth century, though some of the more modern ones are very fine of their kind.

From the west end of the church, standing just inside the main door, one obtains an impressive view of the high choir,

its apse, and the fully developed and graceful triforium of Early Gothic architecture. The portion of the latter which is above the choir is interesting on account of showing something like plate-tracery in the head of each opening of the coupled arches. The shafts dividing the last are somewhat thick and clumsy, but are nevertheless handsome and effective. The piers, except on one side of the transept, are round. Unfortunately, those of the nave are spoiled (as is the general effect) by the placing of huge figures of the Apostles against them. The caps of the pillars are decorated with knots of oak-leaves in double rows, backed by a kind of trellis the effect of which is decidedly pleasing. As is the case with the Cathedral at Antwerp, the bases of the octagonal pillars are unusually low, probably for the same reason, namely, that the floor level has been raised since the church was built. The clustered vaulting shafts have caps and bases, and rest upon the abaci of the piers.

The clerestory has six lights with rich and varied geometrical heads of tracery, which are restorations. This interesting portion of the building dates from about 1518. The south end of the transept and a part of that of the north are of contemporary date with the choir, that is to say, about 1273. The bases of the vaulting in the nave should be particularly noted, as they are richer than is usually found in Belgian churches. The roof is about the same period as the clerestory.

The choir ambulatory contains at the commencement of the apse on the left-hand side of the church, a large figure of Ste. Gudule trampling the Devil beneath her feet. The pillars on the right of the apse are fine, and the stained glass interesting and good, though quite modern. As one leaves the apse, having made the circuit of the ambulatory, one finds a gilded statue of St. Michael, the second patron of the church, balancing that of Ste. Gudule on the other side. Close to it is a quaint and interesting wooden Easter Sepulchre, with figures of the Virgin, the two Maries, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, with the risen Christ above and Roman soldiers below. This, we have noted, appears to possess a great attraction for provincials of the peasant and *petit bourgeois* class, who gaze at the wooden (in more senses than one) figures open-mouthed.

The stained glass of the choir apse dates from the middle





ST. GUDULE, BRUSSELS



of the sixteenth century. The subjects are the Virgin, the patron saints, and various kings and queens in adoration of Our Lady. Among the latter are Maximilian of Austria, and Mary Burgundy; Philippe III. le Beau, and his wife, Johanna the Mad of Castile, Charles V., and Philippe II. of Spain. The architecture of this portion of the church forms an interesting specimen of Early Gothic work.

The remaining other chapel of importance on the southern side of the ambulatory is dedicated to *Notre Dame de Délivrance*. It was built from 1649-63. Originally both the choir aisles of the church were bordered with small chapels like those of the nave, and were divided from the aisles by pointed arches which sprang from clustered columns. About the year 1634, however, those of the northern aisle were pulled down, and the single large chapel of *St. Sacrament des Miracles* took their place, and a century later, to gain uniformity, those of the southern aisle were also pulled down, and the chapel we are now about to describe built in their place. By these alterations the plan of the church became a parallel triapsidal.

The windows of the chapel of *Notre Dame de Délivrance* are from designs by Van Thulden, carried out in 1656. They are far inferior in quality and execution to those in the chapel of the *St. Sacrament des Miracles*, and show evidence of the decay into which the art of glass-painting had by that time fallen. The subjects are naturally taken from the life of the Virgin, and are seen in the upper portions of the windows, the lower being occupied by the donors and princes of the House of Austria with their patron saints. In the fourth, or outer, window there is a representation of the Visit of Mary to Elizabeth, the figure and odd hat worn by the former marking it as having been inspired by, if not actually copied from, the Rubens in Antwerp Cathedral.

Ste. Gudule, other than in its architecture, relies almost entirely for interest in its stained glass. The church possesses few pictures, and none of any particular value or note. There are, however, some valuable and interesting pieces of tapestry, the work of Van der Borgh, dating from the end of the eighteenth century, the subject of which is the story of the Miraculous Wafers. The pulpit, which was formerly in the Church of the Jesuits at



Louvain, is the work of Verbruggen, and dates from 1699. It is considered by some critics to be "a horrible monstrosity in the worst possible taste of a tasteless period." But although bewilderingly elaborate in its carving it represents much good work, and is famous, and much admired by the average visitor to the church. The subject is the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. Above the sounding-board or canopy are figures of the Virgin and Child, the latter bruising the head of the serpent with the Cross. The Tree of Life, which supports the platform, overshadows innumerable animals carved on the railing and elsewhere. Some of these are said to represent the vices of fallen man.

In the sacristy there are some relics and valuable gifts made to the church by the Archduke Albert and the Infanta Isabella of Spain, including one of the largest portions of the True Cross known to exist.

Southward from Ste. Gudule, a little distance beyond the University, lies the interesting Gothic Church of *Notre Dame de la Chapelle*, built in 1216 upon the site of a simple oratory, the foundation stone of which was, it is said, laid by Godefroi-le-Barbu, Duke of Brabant, about the year 1134. Formerly this chapel stood outside the walls of Brussels, and the patronage vested in the famous Abbey of Ste. Sepulchre at Cambrai. Very early in the thirteenth century it was raised to the status of a parish church, and about 1216 the existing choir and transept were built. The nave was not erected till 1421-1428.

In the choir and transepts the student has an interesting example of the Transitional and Early Pointed Periods of architecture, of which so few examples are left in the churches of Brabant. The building has other features of interest from the "mixture" of its architectural styles. In it one can trace the Romanesque, First Pointed, and in the nave some very good fifteenth-century work. Externally, the portions of the building which most interested us were the choir and south transept, although these suffer considerably in effectiveness by the dwarfing appearance produced by the nave, the aisle walls of which reach as high as the spring of the gable of the transept. The old central tower (upper part pulled down), the remains of which now form a continuation of the clerestory in the nave, was very

severe in character; and the present tower at the west end is not a particularly imposing or interesting structure.

The interior of the church is distinctly pleasing, elegant, and spacious; and the unusually handsome clusters of shafts form the piers supporting the arch opening to the full height of the building into the nave from the tower, producing a remarkably noble effect when seen from a distance at the east end. The ingenuity by which some of the Romanesque features were retained at the time the building underwent alterations and reconstruction in part at the commencement of the thirteenth century, should be noted by all who are at all interested in the more advanced study of architecture.

The church possesses several interesting altar-pieces and pictures, and on entering one sees on the left a marble monument to the artist, A. C. Lens, who died in 1822, and for whom it is, we think, somewhat extravagantly claimed in the inscription that he was "the regenerator of the art of painting in Belgium," with the additional statement that he was "a perfect Christian."

In the aisles there are several interesting altar-pieces of the seventeenth century, and in the various chapels a few good pictures by Jaspar de Crayer and Theodore Van Thulden.

The sacristy contains some rich ecclesiastical vestments and other treasures; and the pulpit, which is less over-elaborate than that of the Cathedral, is worth attention. It is the work of Plumier, and represents Elijah in the Wilderness. The high altar, which superseded one from designs by Rubens, is not pleasing or tasteful, and as a whole the church, interesting though its architectural details undoubtedly are, has been over-restored.

The other medieval church of any considerable interest in Brussels is that of *Notre Dame des Victoires du Sablon*, which can be easily reached from the Chapelle by the Rue Montagne de la Cour, Place Royale, and the fine Rue de la Régence.

It is a well-isolated Late Gothic building, standing on the site of an old and small chapel, erected in the first years of the fourteenth century by the Corporation of Archers or Crossbowmen, in commemoration of the Battle of Woeringen, at which Duke John I. of Brabant gained a



signal victory over the Count of Guelders and the Archbishop of Cologne.

The handsome and deeply recessed western portal, and the most beautiful traceried window above it, at once arrest one's attention. In the rose window of the south transept one has a rare feature in the architecture of Belgian churches. Though pleasing and effective it cannot, of course, compare with the many beautiful examples found in some of even the smaller French churches. The southern porch below is the most ancient portion of the building, and dates from about 1410. The lofty choir is especially impressive; it terminates in a five-sided apse, and possesses no aisles. It should be noted that this church is one of the few in Belgium—and this makes it of especial interest to the student—planned with double aisles to each side of the nave.

Unfortunately the church has a coating of whitewash, but the general impression created on the mind by the interior is a pleasing and harmonious one.

Among the small details that may be noticed is the *ex voto*, in the form of a ship, placed over the inside of the main entrance in commemoration of a sacred image, which, it is stated, miraculously floated ashore when lost at sea; the partially restored tomb of Count Flaminio Garnier, secretary to the Duke of Parma, with a series of fine alabaster Renaissance reliefs, depicting the history of the Virgin; the pulpit; the two seventeenth-century burial chapels (to the left of the choir) of the Princes of Thurn and Taxis; the fine modern stained glass; and the memorial tablet to Rousseau, the French poet, who died at Genette, near Brussels, in 1741, placed near the door of the sacristy. Rousseau was buried here just a hundred and one years after his death.

The series of mural paintings in the choir by Van der Plaetsen are chiefly of interest as being exact reproductions of ancient frescoes of processions, dating from the fifteenth century, discovered under the whitewash during restorations in 1860. The originals, unhappily, were injured beyond the possibility of repair.

Although, as may be well imagined, there are several other interesting, and many unimportant, churches in Brussels, there are none that need be visited by any save the most inveterate student of architecture or sightseer. Of those which deserve a few moments' attention by enthusiasts



may be mentioned St. Jacques sur Caudenberg, formerly the abbey church of an old Augustine foundation, and the State church of the Spanish governors; and the *Église du Béguinage*, dating from 1657, and erected, it is supposed, from designs by Lucas Faïd'herbe, containing several good pictures by De Crayer, Otho Vaenius, and others.

Of the other fine and historic buildings which Brussels boasts, the Palais du Roi stands on the southern side of the beautiful park, in which there is a theatre, "Vauxhall" garden, ponds, and tree-shadowed walks, in summer evenings crowded by throngs of happy Brussels bourgeois and their families, intent on taking the air and enjoying the scenes of gaiety around them. Occupying the site of the castle of the Dukes of Brabant and the Spanish governors, burned down in 1731, it is now a handsome building, the structure which replaced the old one destroyed by fire having been remodelled and greatly added to of late years. The interior is a storehouse of beautiful pictures, furniture, and bric-à-brac, and is well worth seeing, though seldom shown of late years to any save those who bring official influence to bear. Quite close by is the *Palais des Académies*, overlooking the south-eastern corner of the park. Formerly it was the Palais Ducal, and it was presented to Prince (afterwards King) William II. of Holland in 1829. Since the middle of the last century it has been the home of the Royal Académies of Sciences, Lettres, Beaux Arts, and Medicine, both of which possess valuable and interesting libraries.

At the opposite end of the park are situated the principal Government offices on the Place de la Nation, including the Palais de la Nation, built from designs by the famous Brussels architect, Guimard, in 1779-83, for the use of the old Council of Brabant. Since the Revolution of 1831 and the formation of Belgium into a separate kingdom, it has served for the purposes of the Belgian Senate and Chamber of Deputies. The building is worth a visit, and if a sitting of the Chamber is proceeding, it has additional interest for those who are fortunate enough to know a member and procure an order for admission. The proceedings lack some of the dignity of our own House of Commons when at its best, and the debates, we have found, like those of the Chamber of Deputies in Paris, the Vienna Reichrath, and the Hungarian Diet, are generally characterized by more

life and personal invective than those of the British Parliament.

The imposing Palais de Justice stands on the Place Poelaert, named in honour of the architect of these magnificent law courts, on which the immense sum of 50,000,000 francs, or £2,000,000 sterling, was spent. The buildings cover an area larger than that occupied by St. Peter's, Rome, and, indeed, form a magnificent monument of civic munificence. The huge block, which is 590 feet long by 560 feet deep, is surmounted by a cupola, which is supported by colossal statues of Justice, Law, Power, and Clemency. The architecture of the building strikes one as having an element of the Assyrian character about it, and, indeed, the architect, Poelaert, is stated to have acknowledged his indebtedness to that ancient art for the governing idea. In the details the Græco-Roman style has been closely followed. The gilded crown on the top of the small dome is 400 feet above the pavement of the Rue des Minimes at the side of the building, and 340 feet above the stones of the Place Poelaert. The steps leading to the vestibule are adorned with gigantic statues of the great orators of the past — Demosthenes, Cicero, Lycurgus, and Domitius Ulpian. There are no less than 27 courts, 8 open courts, and 245 rooms of various sizes connected with the legal work of the nation within the building, and there is a handsome and lofty *Salle de Pas Perdus* with galleries under the central dome.

From the terrace of the Place Poelaert there is a fine view over the picturesque roofs of the city, and seen at sunset, as we have often seen it under varying conditions of clearness and opalescent haze, the prospect is a most beautiful one.

At the northern end of the Rue aux Laines, near the Place du Petit Sablon, stands the Palace of the Duc D'Arenberg, in which Lamoral, the famous Count Egmont, resided. It was built in 1548, and restored in 1753, and has a modern right wing. It is now the property of the municipality. There was a serious fire in 1892, which did considerable damage to the oldest portion of the building, but, happily, the private apartments of the Brussels hero, Count Egmont, escaped injury. The collection of pictures, some 170 in number, housed on the first floor, is an important and



admirable one. The canvases are mostly of the seventeenth century, by Dutch and Flemish masters. Among the pictures are examples of Philip Wouverman, D. Teniers the younger ("Skittle Players"), J. Van Craesbeek ("The Artist's Studio"), Adrian Van Ostade ("Tavern Interior"), W. Van Der Welde the younger, Franz Hals ("The Merry Toper"), David Teniers the elder, G. Terburg, Watteau ("Bathing in the Open Air," "Fête Galante," and "Lady at her Toilet"), Paul Potter, Jacques Jordaens ("As the Old have Sung, so Pipe the Young"), and Koharsky ("Portrait of Marie Antoinette, painted in the Temple"; most interesting). In Room I. we particularly noticed the fine "Portrait of Count Elbert of Arenberg," by A. Van Dyck, "Portrait of a Lady," "Portrait of Anna Maria of Camudio," and "The Rape of Amphitrite," by Jacques Jordaens. There are also some interesting printed books, some containing miniatures, which bibliophiles will be sure to covet.

Among the other smaller collections of pictures in Brussels is one of a very different nature—that in the Wiertz Museum, which has been variously described as "modernism in art gone mad," and "madness in pigments." It is situate near the Parc Leopold, behind the station of the Quartier Leopold, and near the Natural History Museum. It is distinctly, even on a bright summer morning, when we last visited it, not a place for people with nerves or those who are subject to nightmare. The Museum is the studio and country residence of the eccentric painter, Anton Joseph Wiertz. There is, it must be admitted, a certain grim and ironical power in most of the pictures, and in some a deeper meaning than would probably suggest itself to the casual visitor, as an American said, "come to enjoy a feast of flesh-creeping some." Among the most important pictures are "The Flight into Egypt," "The Beacon of Golgotha," "The Burnt Child," "Orphans," "The Lion of Waterloo," "The Toilet," "The Rosebud," "An Ambuscade," "The Last Cannon," "Portrait of My Mother," and "The Concierge." Other paintings of an even more realistic character, amongst them "The Novel Reader," "Hunger, Madness, and Crime," "Buried Alive," and "Quasimodo," are hidden behind screens, in which holes have been cut to enable one to view them. Of the



genius of Wiertz there can be no question, but we think it was that genius which approximates too nearly to madness to enable it to carry out any mission or accomplish any revolution in taste successfully.

The art treasures of Brussels, enshrined in the *Musée Royal de Peinture Ancienne et des Sculpture*; in the handsome *Palais des Beaux Arts*; the *Musée Moderne de Peinture*, in the *Ancienne Cour*, once the residence of the Austrian Stadtholders of the Netherlands, adjoining the Royal Library; and the *Musées Royaux des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels*, and *Musée d'Antiquités et d'Armures*, erected in 1381, and used by the Duke of Alva as the Belgian Bastille, which has had its vaulted chambers skilfully adapted for its present purpose, are celebrated throughout the world. They one and all contain priceless treasures which the scope of the present volume will not permit us to attempt to name or describe, however briefly. Nearly all great artists of the past and present of the Flemish or Dutch schools are well represented, as are the masters of foreign schools in the *Musée de Peinture Moderne*.

The galleries of the *Palais des Beaux Arts* are rich in the works of the old Flemish masters, including some wonderful examples of Roger Van der Weyden, Memlinc's master; and Dierick Bouts; in those of the schools of the transitional period of Flemish and Dutch art, down to the third great period of Rubens, and his notable successors, Rembrandt, Franz Hals, Gerard Dow, the Teniers, and others.

It may, of course, be justly urged by critics, for example, that Memlinc's works in the *Palais des Beaux Arts*, fine though they are, do not equal in interest or value those at Bruges, that Rubens should be studied at Antwerp rather than here, and that Quentin Matsys can also be better seen at Antwerp. But if this be so there are scores of works of other artists which form connecting links in the golden chain of the progressive art of painting which can be seen nowhere else to such advantage, or in such admirable company.

To merely see the treasures of the *Musée Royal de Peinture Ancienne et de Sculpture*, and those of the *Musée Moderne de Peinture*, occupies several mornings. To really study these collections would take several weeks.

At all events, however short the time at one's disposal, one leaves these galleries with an almost biting impression



THE FLOWER MARKET, GRANDE PLACE, BRUSSELS





of the greatness of the masters of the past; of the genius which inspired their works; of the lessons they, though many of them long dead, can teach; and the knowledge they can convey in a few hours of the life, character, and sentiment of past ages. They reconstitute the past by a series of pictures, commencing when Chivalry was in flower, and lead us on down through the Middle Ages to the very verge of the nineteenth century, when in a sense symbolism for a time, at least, died, and romance was in a measure ousted by the more practical aims and ends of modern civilization.

It is not unfitting, we think, that a city with such an historic past as Brussels, a place where the triumphs of Art through many centuries survives, should be surrounded by such natural beauties as it is. Northward one has the beautiful Royal Park of Laeken, with its palace built in 1782 by Montoyer, and occupied several times by Napoleon during the years 1803-1814. Southward lies the exquisite Bois de la Cambre, a portion of the old Fôret de Soignes, now a beautiful park laid out somewhat on the lines of the Bois de Boulogne, but wilder in parts. Then there is the pretty park of Tervuelen, the rendezvous in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of gallants and fair ladies, and the scene of *Fêtes Champêtres*, Court Festivals, and hunting parties, with its ten small lakes, charming dells, and woodland beauties. Not to speak of Boisfort, with its comparatively untamed beech and pine woods, water-lily ponds, and winding, tree-shaded paths. And other "forests," small and large, north, south, east, and west.

Both within its borders and immediately beyond them Brussels is well endowed with woods and spots where the hum of the city can for a time be no longer heard, houses be lost sight of, and even the song of birds be listened to and the charm of shy, growing wild flowers be discovered.

Much might, of course, be written of Brussels as a great commercial city, with its busy markets, crowded docks, and its fine, silent highway of the New Canal, connecting it with the North Sea, which will perhaps some day enable it to rival Antwerp. But to tell the whole story of Brussels, with its teeming, varying life, its many-sided interests of Art, Letters, and Commerce, would need a large volume to itself.

We have sought to sketch some of its essential features, and note a few of its most alluring charms.

As one leaves it, bound westward for Ghent, through the fine new suburbs, one carries away a memory of a delightful modern city, which nevertheless seems to preserve an atmosphere in keeping with its romantic history, and the beauty with which the great minds of architects, statesmen, and artists of the bygone ages have dowered it.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LOUVAIN AND WATERLOO

LOUVAIN, distant some fifteen miles eastward from Brussels, is but a dull place nowadays. So, at least, says one well-known writer, and we were not, therefore, disappointed on reaching the ancient town to find that its chief present-day charm lies in its dulness, picturesqueness, and general air of aloofness from the fret and fume of modern ways. But few who are sympathetic to old-world things would willingly miss the ancient town on the Dyle.

To reach it we jolted over the *pavé*, and out from Brussels through the Porte de Louvain on a bright summer morning. The country is less flat, more picturesque, and better wooded than along the road northward from Brussels to Malines; and as one leaves Schaerbeek behind, one plunges from the city into a pleasant agricultural district of picturesque farms, scattered villages, and often tree-environed roads. Just beyond Dieghem—a noted pilgrimage resort, and famous for its Easter Monday *kermesse*—we were fortunate to find an archery meeting in progress—a survival of a sport for which, in olden days, Flanders was famous.

In many of the towns and villages through which our pilgrim and vagrant way led us, there were archery clubs and guilds of archers, rejoicing some of them in high-sounding names; but although many members were practising at the butts, or were to be seen on the way to the archery-grounds, we had not been fortunate enough to come across a contest.

At a little village just past Dieghem—consisting, like many another in Belgium, of a straggling street of white cottages, with red or greyish-brown roofs and small front gardens, an *herberg* or tavern or two—we came luckily upon



an archery meeting, which, we were assured by the parish priest, who spoke excellent French as well as Flemish, was of "*premier rang*." In a field by the wayside, unenclosed save for a white rail where the cyclists' cinder-track ran, were gathered together a couple of score of mostly knicker-bockered men or gaitered youths, with a sprinkling of children. They stood round an asphalted circular space about 30 feet in diameter, in the centre of which rose a lofty scaffold-pole or roughly-trimmed poplar, tapering towards the top, and perhaps 60 feet in height. A little way from it stood the wooden archery-shed, outside which, but sheltered by the overhanging eaves, a knot of spectators were gathered to watch the contest. The pole was, high up, rigged almost like a ship's mast with slender spars, having attached to them a number of small wooden pegs, to to which were fastened gay-coloured tufts or bunches of worsted. To the very top of the pole was fixed a larger bunch than the rest, shaped not unlike a parrot, and inclined a little out of the perpendicular so that it could be easily seen when standing immediately below. These tufts of worsted are known as "pigeons," and are the marks at which the archers nowadays aim, who, in olden days, often shot at the real birds on the wing.

We asked M. le Curé what was about to happen. His reply has since, in another connection, become historic. It was : *Attendez, et nous verrons*—*anglice*, "Wait and see!"

M. le Curé was particularly anxious that no harm should come to us, and so he invited us within the shelter of the overhanging eaves of the "pavilion." The men and youths, with the long bows and quivers of arrows, who had fore-gathered for the prize shooting and had been given numbers to be followed as the order of proceeding, then stood back a little distance from the pole, and No. 1 advanced quite close to it; and after, with what would seem over-elaboration of care, fitting an arrow to the string, let fly into the air at one or another of the "pigeons" of worsted, whose gay colours looked all the gayer in the brilliant sunshine. The arrow appeared to scrape one of the "pigeons," but failed to dislodge it, and the disappointed archer, with a look of disgust at the arrow as it winged its way high above the pole, to fall a moment or two later with a "plob" on the ground, made way for another competitor. Then the reason for the two

or three big-hatted urchins, who had been chasing one another about, became apparent. One of them darted forward almost ere the arrow fell to the ground, and picked it up for future use. They are blunt, but could doubtless give a very nasty blow in falling were the "caddies' " heads not protected by these broad-brimmed hats with thickly-padded crowns.

The "pigeons" need to be hit forcibly and fair and square to be dislodged, and to bring them down is the aim of the rival archers, who may be all members of one society competing against one another, or members of some guild (often called after the patron saint of archers, St. Sebastian) competing against those of another guild.

It is not easy to imagine the excitement which this rivalry arouses. Lusty "bravos" and cheers reward the good shots of the competitors, and the fall of each "pigeon" is eagerly noted.

"It will continue, maybe, till sundown," explained M. le Curé as we mounted our bicycles at the end of an hour and after a draught of pale Belgian beer at the "pavilion." "You must not forget, messieurs, it is a great national sport; that it is an ancient institution, some six or seven hundred years old"—and then, as though fearing his dates were extravagantly remote, he added, with an almost apologetic smile and a wave of his hand, "at least, so I have read."

Afterwards, when we returned to Brussels we learned more of this ancient sport, and how at old-time Bruges there is a Society of St. George of Crossbowmen, who, in the month of February in each year, hold a strange and ancient festival, known as the *Hammenkens feest*. The competition takes place in a large room, where a target is set up divided into numerous spaces, which are each of them marked with the name of some dish forming an item of the feast to follow. The competitors, in a sense, construct their own menu; for according to the space one's cross-bolt hits, so one's viands. In the centre of the target is the figure of a monkey, the reward for hitting which is the right to select any dish one pleases. But one is by no means allowed to eat in peace after winning a dish, for should one of the crossbowmen hit a certain "dish" on the target, and another competitor following him hits the same mark, the

former has to resign his seat to the latter. Under such circumstances it is possible that "digestion does *not* wait upon appetite."

Saventhem is but a mile or little more from Dieghem along the Louvain road. Its quaint parish church will always attract visitors by reason of its great possession—the Van Dyck, the subject of which is St. Martin dividing and giving his garments to the poor. It is not one of this artist's greatest works, but is interesting, and of considerable value. It has suffered somewhat, we fancy, from the work of restoration the picture underwent in 1902.

The most usual road to Louvain lies through Cortenberg and Velthem. It is picturesque, and more interesting than many Belgian roads, but there is nothing of special note by the way until the approach to Hérent, near which is the important church of the former abbey of Vlierbeek.

Louvain, in Flemish Louven, or Loven, is still a large town of close upon 50,000 inhabitants, and the seat of a bishopric. A view from the tower of Ste. Gertrude shows it to be, as one indeed suspects on entering it, rather less flat than most Flemish towns, and, in its general characteristics, reminding one both of Ghent and Bruges. Like many another city of the Low Countries, its zenith was reached in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and its decline was rapid and complete. In Louvain of to-day it would be difficult for anyone unacquainted with the history of Flanders and the Netherlands, and of the city itself, to imagine it the relic of the "great town of upwards of 200,000 souls, the seat of a University having 6,000 students, and famous down till the seventh century, noted for its weaving industries, and throbbing with the commercial life of the Middle Ages." All that has passed away, leaving the once proud city shorn of three-fourths of its population, nearly all its industries, and most of its fame other than that attached to the undying past.

Now, as one cycles into it across fields that were once the site of its outlying suburbs, through its ramparts converted into promenades, and streets which have the air of but partial life and of almost suspended animation, one realizes that it is here, as in many another Belgian town, the past that counts, and not the present. The name itself gives some idea of its ancient character, Loo signifying a wooded



hill, and Veen, or Vain, a marsh. It was near here that the famous Emperor Arnulf defeated the insurgent Normans in 891; and from very early times the place had an importance which ultimately caused a line of Counts to make it their principal residence. These latter grasped the lands forming the Duchy of Lower Lorraine, and ultimately assumed the title, at the end of the twelfth century, of Dukes of Brabant.

In the fourteenth century it had become so commercially prosperous a place that one authority states (though we think there must be some exaggeration) that there were no less than 2,400 factories in the city, which owed its chief wealth to the weaving industry.

Those who seek for the architecturally picturesque will not be disappointed. In the more ancient and narrow streets many "bits" for "Kodaker" and artist alike are to be found; and the banks of the Dyle remind one of both Malines and Bruges, with their jumble of ancient roofs and quaint, unperpendicular walls of houses which seem, many of them, desirous but to slip into the oblivion of the turbid waters washing their foundations.

Though there are a Cathedral and several large and interesting churches at Louvain, it is the beautiful Late Gothic Hôtel de Ville, rivalling that of Brussels in beauty, and almost unnatural in its elaboration, that attracts most tourists and students. Erected in the centre of the town, that had nearly three centuries before been encircled "by a strong wall upon which were forty towers," by Matthew de Layens in 1447-1463, it is said to have been commenced on the Thursday after Easter Day, and occupied fifteen years in the building. This wonderfully ornate building—indeed, some critics are inclined to point out this particular feature as its chief fault—is a mass of turrets, pinnacles, statues, dormers, canopies, tracery, and quaint and delicate ornamentation, and yet it is stated to have cost no more than 32,750 florins—even making allowance for the difference in the value of money, one would think an impossibly small sum.

The building consists of three lofty stories, each of them containing ten pointed windows in the principal façade, surmounted by a steep roof surrounded by an open balustrade. Although so architecturally rich, it is one of the smallest buildings of its kind in any city of the Low

Countries of the importance of Louvain. Its dimensions are—length, 113 feet; width, 41 feet; height, 73 feet to the parapet. Six slender and elegant octagonal turrets crowned by open spires rise from the corners and spring from the centre of the gables, giving a dignity and richness to the elevation and silhouette of the building. The three different façades are lavishly adorned with sculptures.

Unfortunately, time and weather found in the intricate and delicate tracery and carvings of this wonderful Hôtel de Ville a peculiarly sensitive material upon which to work destruction. So great was the decay by the later part of the eighteenth century that steps were taken for the restoration of the exterior. This was commenced in 1829, and, although the work was stopped for a time in 1842, the serious damaging of the western gable by lightning in 1890 caused a new series of renovations to be undertaken, which have proceeded more or less ever since. The total sum spent during the last century on restoration must have been immense. The work as a whole may be admitted to have been well and carefully done, but of necessity some of the modern work compares unfavourably in beauty with the old that it in parts replaces, and is hard—a failing only time can remedy.

It would be difficult to describe in any detail the variety of the carvings upon the façades. The brackets bearing the statues in the niches, which were restored by Willem Goyers and others, are decorated with almost completely detached reliefs depicting scenes from Old and New Testament history, shown in some instances with quaint medieval coarseness of detail and conception. They are arranged in chronological order, commencing at the lower stage, and continuing in each tier from left to right. There are no less than 280 niches for statues, and it would appear that until after the work of restoration the whole of them had never been filled with figures. They add very materially to the richness and beauty of the façade, as anyone who may have seen the building when many of the niches in the end façade were unoccupied will remember.

The statues all represent persons identified with, and prominent in, the history of Louvain. Among those in the lower tier most easily distinguishable are Quentin Matsys, Pope Adrian VI., Erasmus, Justus Lipsius (the famous pro-

fessor and lecturer at Louvain University in the early years of the seventeenth century), Stuerbout, Matthew de Layens (the architect of the building), Pope Martin V., Elzevir (the printer), and others.

The flight of steps by which one enters the building date only from the early part of the eighteenth century. The ancient wrought-iron parâpet was the work of Quentin Matsys.

The interior we found, as do no doubt most people, in a measure disappointing. Many of the apartments are now fitted up in modern style, and have furniture in keeping, and the pictures decorating the various rooms and ceilings are many of them modern, though far from uninteresting or poor.

The ceilings of most of the rooms which are shown to visitors, however, are handsome. That of the *Salle des Mariages*, on the first floor, which is of chestnut, is finely carved, with the corbels and bosses enriched with subjects taken from the New Testament. The *Salle Gothique* also has a beautiful ceiling, and contains some interesting paintings by Hennebicq, illustrating scenes in the history of the town, with portraits of notable citizens. There is a small museum in which we noticed some good portraits, a triptych, "The Triumph of Christ," by Michel Coxie; two triptychs by that notable Louvain master, Jan van Rillaer the Elder, and an "Adoration of the Magi," by Pieter J. Vernaghem.

From the windows of this Hôtel de Ville, in 1378, during one of the many insurrections of the weavers—who seem always to have been a turbulent class—thirteen nobles who were magistrates were thrown, and their bodies caught upon the pikes of the awaiting mob, and afterwards hacked to pieces and paraded round the town with a ferocity on a par with that shown by the French revolutionaries.

The fine, oak-beamed roof of the *Salle de Pas Perdus*, with its quaint staircase, and historic memories and atmosphere of a bygone age, should not be missed. The roof (or at least the carved corbels upon which it rests) dates from 1448.

As we have said, Louvain possesses several fine and interesting churches, and of these the late Gothic and spireless building of St. Pierre, opposite the Hôtel de Ville



on the Grande Place, is the most important. Exteriorly, except to the expert student of architecture, it scarcely gives promise of its beautiful interior, although the proportions of this cruciform structure are exceedingly impressive.

The church is nearly 334 feet in length, about 82 feet in breadth, and of like height, and originally it had two immense towers at the west end, long ago destroyed by fire and never replaced. The stone model for these, by Josse Matsys, is to be seen in the museum of the Hôtel de Ville. The general effect of this fine church is considerably spoiled by the close proximity of the houses.

The present church, which was begun somewhere about 1430, or shortly before the Hôtel de Ville, stands on the site of an eleventh-century building, and was finished in the early years of the sixteenth century. The western tower was denuded of its wooden spire during the fierce storm of 1606, and this has not been replaced. One cannot help regretting the ugly wooden bell turret at the crossing which, to our mind, nowadays only serves to mar the exterior. On entering the building we find, as in the case with the cathedral at Antwerp, St. Pierre shows the continuous impost on its piers; though these are apparently of somewhat later date; and the pier mouldings have a rectangular character in keeping. Much of the open lattice-work tracery of the triforium, which is of a somewhat unusual character, though resembling that of Malines, is very beautiful, and is Flamboyant in character. One notices with satisfaction that the noble simplicity and harmonious proportions of this great and inspiring church have escaped belittlement by one of the black and white marble screens which are so common a feature in the choirs of many Belgian churches.

Although the original and highly decorated rood-loft, dating from about 1450, which spans the eastern arch of the crossing, is preserved and forms a splendid piece of Flamboyant work in stone and gilding, it has unfortunately been tampered with, and has in the process lost much of its *raison d'être* and symbolical significance. It supports a large Crucifix, and above the arcade of three wide and flat ogee arches, which are cusped in a florid manner with carvings that appear to ripple along the inner edges, is a sculptured parapet containing figures of the Saviour, the Virgin, the Twelve Apostles, bearing the various instru-



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ments of their martyrdom, and others of the Doctors of the Church. Above the arches themselves are ogee-shaped hoods and finials. It should be mentioned that formerly, probably until the period of the French Revolution, the side arches supporting the back of the loft contained two altars and reredoses; the entrance being closed by two gates of ornamental ironwork. Unhappily, the removal of this constitutes only a portion of the vandalism (perpetrated, some aver, by the ecclesiastical authorities themselves) which has been so detrimental to the church, and included the demolition of *sedelia*, the high altar, and other removals of a like regrettable character which served to destroy in a great measure the beauty and character of the choir. Fortunately, the upper portion of the screen and loft are much as they originally were, and the feature remains one of the best examples of Flamboyant Late Gothic work in Belgium and perhaps even in Europe.

The famous Tabernacle for the reception of the Reserved Sacrament, of which there is so excellent a drawing in the well-known work of John Coney\* stands under the last arch to the north side of the choir. It forms one of the most wonderful and elaborate examples in Belgium. It is nearly fifty feet in height, and is literally a mass of crocketed pinnacles and the ornamentation upon which artists of the fifteenth century seemed to love to expend time, thought, and ingenuity. It was constructed from the designs of Matthew de Layens, the architect of the Hôtel de Ville.

The whole of this beautiful church well repays careful scrutiny and study. But the most casual of visitors should not miss seeing the wonderful central window of the façade, with its unusually deeply recessed jambs, and the beautiful Renaissance case to the carved organ which is placed above the arch opening to the choir aisle from the north transept.

In the various chapels are to be seen several pictures of considerable interest, and other relics of former days. The old stained glass in the first chapel on the south side should be noted, as the colouring is fine and mellow. The triptych of Jan van der Baeren, dating from about 1594, the subject of which is the "Martyrdom of St. Dorothea," is also worth attention, chiefly on account of the interesting contemporary views of Louvain.

\* "Beauties of Continental Architecture."

The merely curious, and those for whom legend and romance have attractions, will look with interest upon the large black Byzantine crucifix in the south aisle, on which the figure of Christ wears an ancient red velvet robe, reaching to the feet, embroidered with stars and tongues of gold. It is probably eleventh or twelfth century work, and is to this day greatly venerated because of the story which attaches to it, that a thief who long ago broke into the church intending sacrilege was seized by the figure and held until the authorities discovered him.

In several of the chapels there are interesting ambries which should not be overlooked. The fittings, including locks, hinges, etc., are evidently original, and probably date from the fifteenth century. The air-holes to these cupboards or recesses are particularly interesting, as they are shaped like the Crown of Thorns.

In the ceiling of the fourth chapel are the quite recently discovered frescoes, from which the whitewash has been cleaned off. They are curious and interesting, and should be studied.

The famous works of Dierick Bouts are placed in the ninth chapel (the first beyond the high altar). "The Last Supper" is the centre picture of a triptych, the two wings of which are unhappily lacking. The right one, representing the Feast of the Passover and Elijah in the Wilderness, is now in the Berlin Museum; and the left, representing the Gathering of the Manna, and Abraham and Melchizedek, at Munich. The work was originally painted for the Louvain members of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, a body which in the Middle Ages in various countries commissioned a good many works of religious art having that subject. The fragment of the picture as seen here, shorn of its two wings, has lost, of course, much of its mystical significance, but deserves careful study on account of the portrait of the donor (the figure by the doorway) and his attendant, and the finely-painted Gothic architecture.

The other triptych by the same artist (an unpleasant subject), depicting the "Martyrdom of St. Erasmus," is in the same chapel.

The pulpit in this church, by Josef Beyer (once in the abbey at Ninove), is one of those over-elaborate erections in which the wood-carvers of the eighteenth century of

Belgium especially delighted. The front of it depicts the conversion of St. Paul,\* with his horse stricken to the ground; the back the repentance (or denial) of St. Peter, with the cock crowing. The latter subject would appear upon consideration somewhat to lack appositeness in a church dedicated to the saint.

In the Rue de Namur, by which the University is reached from St. Pierre, still stand several ancient, and, on the whole, well-preserved, houses.

Originally the *Halles*, erected in 1317 as a warehouse for the wealthy and powerful Clothworkers' Guild, the University was founded in 1426. The upper story of this not very inspiring building, which has seen many vicissitudes and undergone various alterations, additions, and renovations, was added in 1680; but the Gothic arches and pillars of the basement floor still afford some evidence of the taste and beauty of the original building.

The University was, when at the height of its fame, looked upon as being among the most noted of its kind in Europe, and its reputation, though it steadily declined from about the middle of the seventeenth century, was considerable till the end of the eighteenth. Indeed, so highly were its rewards for learning anciently esteemed that no one could hold in the Austrian Netherlands any public appointment who did not possess a Louvain degree. This seat of learning was suppressed by the French Republicans.

It was reopened in 1817 by the Dutch Government, but seventeen years later from various causes (the opposition of the clergy to its control by the Dutch being one), it was once more closed. It was shortly afterwards revived as a free Catholic University, maintained by the Bishops, and without State control. Nowadays its students number from 1,500 to 1,600.

The Library of the University, which was founded in 1724, is a fine and extensive one, containing upwards of 150,000 volumes, which include some fine manuscripts and valuable early printed books. The building is adorned with much good wood-carving, and contains a huge sculptured group by Geerts, the subject of which is "The Flood."

Though none of the churches in Louvain except that of St. Pierre are of any great note or importance, if time allows

\* Some writers incline to the belief that this figure is one of St. Norbert.



the visitor will not have cause to regret an hour or two spent in visiting St. Michael's, which stands at the end of the Rue de Namur and distant from the University only a couple of hundred yards; Ste. Gertrude's, which lies in quite the opposite direction northward along the Rue de Malines and stands close to the Porte of the same name; and the Dominican church of Notre Dame close by.

The first-named church (St. Michael) is chiefly interesting as a good, and perhaps one might almost say one of the most striking examples of the work of the architects who were responsible for the Belgian baroque style. There is nothing, however, of any great interest to take one into the interior, although that is pleasing and well-proportioned.

Of Ste. Gertrude's, too, formerly the church of an abbey, the exterior presents the chief interest. It is an elegant and well-proportioned building, very much hemmed in by houses, consisting of a nave and apsidal choir; aisleless and under one roof. The western tower is elegant and well-proportioned, and is crowned with a very tasteful fretted parapet, from the four corners of which rise octagonal turrets with pinnacles, and from the centre a pleasing octagonal spire, pierced the whole way up vertically, and crocketed. The piercing conferring upon it an additionally light and elegant appearance.

Of the interior it is not necessary for us to give any detailed description. In the lights of the clerestory one can trace an element akin in character to that of the late English Perpendicular work; and in the jambs of the windows lighting the chapel on the north side of the choir there is a distinct trace of the Renaissance spirit.

The chief charm of the church, however, to the ordinary visitor will undoubtedly be the famous and interesting choir stalls, of which there are two ranks. These are of oak so richly and elaborately carved as in a large measure to merit the claim which is advanced for them that they represent some of the finest examples of wood-carving in the whole of the Netherlands. The date of this beautiful and interesting work, which was done by Matthew de Waeyer by order of Pierre Was, the then superior of the abbey of Ste. Gertrude, is 1540. The carvings ornamenting the backs of the upper row of stalls depict scenes in the History of Religion, some of them quaint, and of deep antiquarian interest. The

subjects of the "misericordes" are taken from events in the lives of Ste. Gertrude and St. Augustine.

There is a triptych of "The Crucifixion" by Michel Coxie, and an interesting reliquary dating from the sixteenth century amongst the treasures of this church, which has suffered materially by the alterations it has undergone, especially by the removal of the rood-screen, finally done away with (after "tinkering" at various periods) in 1848.

Hard by Ste. Gertrude, amid a wilderness of narrow, and nowadays much-deserted streets, stands the church of the Dominicans dedicated to Notre Dame and built between 1230 and 1260. It is a rather interesting example of the many churches which throughout Europe were about the middle of the thirteenth century founded by the Preaching Friars. It is of grey stone, coloured by age, and has a simple impressiveness in its goodly proportions which renders it attractive. Unfortunately the interior, which under any circumstances, we think, would owing to structural reasons be less pleasing than one would anticipate from the outside view and particularly interesting western elevation, has been much spoiled by paint and whitewash.

Those who are interested in medieval religious foundations will do well to spare time when at Louvain to visit the ancient Abbaye de Parc of the Premonstratensian Order,\* which lies just outside the walls on the road we shall soon be taking along the banks of the Dyle to Weert St. Georges, on our way to Waterloo and back to Brussels.

This fine abbey, which was founded in 1129, and was dissolved in the last decade of the eighteenth century during the French Revolution, was reinstituted in 1836, affords excellent example of a great monastic institution to-day much as it was centuries ago. The outer court is rendered picturesque by the farm buildings which surround it; whilst the inner contains the dwellings of the canons. The interiors of the main buildings have many handsome rooms in the style of the early part of the eighteenth century, and on the walls are hung some excellent and interesting pictures by Verhaghen, Duplessis, Ernest Quellin, and Coxie.

\* Or White Canons. This order was founded in 1120 by Norbert, a monk at Prémontré, near Laon. The order ultimately spread widely throughout England.—C. H.

The church is interesting, and contains some good wood carvings by Pieter Jos. Verhaghen.

A few hours even spent within such a community as that of the fathers of the Abbaye de Parc gives one a better idea of religious medievalism, its pervading spirit, its *raison d'être*, its influences, and its objects than many hours' study of books.

As we left Louvain behind it is with a rather confused memory of charm and squalor. The exquisite Hôtel de Ville and the fine Church of St. Pierre are in one's mind in conflict with many narrow and dirty streets through which we rambled in search of the picturesque. Streets in which children played in a state of clothing, or want of it, nearly bordering upon Nature, and where little appeared upon the surface to have been done as regards either repairs to the tumbledown houses or sanitation. The native brew, "Bière de Louvain" should, we think, after experiment be avoided. It is peculiar!

And yet we would not have missed Louvain.

From Louvain to Waterloo, down the valley of the Dyle, past Héverlé and Weert St. Georges, to Wavre, and thence across country to the famous battlefield, forms a delightful and charming summer's day ride, with vistas of landscape and river scenery, well-wooded heights, quaint villages, and the river life which is always interesting and picturesque.

Near Héverlé is the fine park and famous château of the Duc d'Arenberg, dating from the beginning of the sixteenth century, and surrounded by charming grounds and gardens. The library, which contains upwards of 50,000 volumes, is famous, and well-known to all bibliophiles. It is probably one of the most valuable, as it is certainly one of the most interesting, private collections in Belgium. The château is not usually shown to visitors, but when the family are not at home anyone presenting credentials from the burgomaster of Louvain, or some official, will be probably permitted to see over at least the grounds and some of the more public apartments; and the privilege is one which must give keen enjoyment to the student of architecture, the connoisseur, and to all interested in the domestic survivals of the past.

From Weert St. Georges to Wavre, to which place the Prussians retreated after their defeat by Napoleon at the Battle of Ligny on June 16, 1815, is a pleasant ride of but



some ten miles, from whence the direct road to Waterloo, distant about twelve miles across country (by way of La Hulpe) is taken.

The roads one traverses in this district are most of them made over the battlefields of the 1815 and previous campaigns, and many of them are undoubtedly much as they were a century ago. Indeed, as one approaches the actual battlefield of Waterloo, with its great, almost flat, expanse, which was on the summer's day when we last saw it a waving sea of corn or fields of scorched brown grass, with here and there a clump or a few single trees, an isolated house or farmstead breaking the shimmering horizon in this direction or that, it was difficult to realize that here and around one the destinies of Europe had been settled by that Titanic struggle between Wellington and Napoleon. As one cycled along the narrow *pavé* roads between the corn-fields towards the centre of the battlefield, and afterwards the highroad leading from Genappe to Brussels, passing first the famous wayside *cabaret* of *La Belle Alliance*, with the farm of *La Salière* and the monument to the French on the opposite side of the road, and the ruins of the *Château de Hougomont* set amid a clump of trees a mile and a half away across the fields, the line along which Napoleon drew up in battle array was crossed.

In a little while we had reached *La Haie Sainte*, and had passed through the gateways set in the whitey-grey plaster wall, which, however, looked dazzlingly white in the brilliant sunshine, into the courtyard of the farm itself, where on the memorable June 18 had fallen, to use the present occupier's own graphic words: "Frenchmen thick as flies gathering upon a piece of carrion." It was garrisoned during the battle by about 500 of the German legion under Von Baring, who fought most gallantly against desperate odds.

"Go anywhere you like," said the pleasant, bronze-faced farmer; and we went, camera in hand, and perhaps not altogether unmoved by the spirit of the place which had played so great a part in the fierce struggles of that day of long ago. Straight in front of us was the great barn, from the gloomy shadows of which first English and then French, and then English again, had poured a fire of musketry as the fortunes of the day waned or flowed for the combatants, into the attackers who stormed in through the great gate-

way of the courtyard, intent on capturing or recapturing the position. Here on this summer's day in the straw on the floor of the barn were sleeping the farm hands, untroubled, apparently, by memories of the scores who had lain there, dead or dying, on that dull day in June, whilst a hail of bullets poured in through the riddled oaken doorway to embed themselves in the bodies of the defenders or the plaster and beams of the rough-built walls and roof. Of course, all visible bullets and those whose presence could be detected have long ago been extracted and bartered away as relics by the various owners of *La Haie Sainte*; but their marks are still distinguishable, like martins' holes in a cliff face, and, as one of the farm-hands said in answer to a question: "Doubtless in the old beams there are yet embedded bullets which have escaped discovery."

In some of the outer walls of the farm were to be seen the bigger dents and holes made by the grapeshot and cannon-balls which had been rained upon the farm for so many hours during the fiercely-fought day.

Of the domestic buildings of *La Haie Sainte*, probably the greater part are reconstructions, as undoubtedly the main building was fired, and at least partially burned, during the battle. But as a whole, just as is the case with Hougomont to the south-west, and the farm of Mont St. Jean further along the Brussels road, the remains are substantially as they were a hundred years ago, making due allowance for necessary repairs and partial reconstruction.

It was Donzelot's division, which had come up too late to support the early cavalry attack upon the Allies' centre, which was ultimately directed by Ney to advance against *La Haie Sainte*. As a prelude to the attack, a furious cannonade was opened upon it, the ammunition of the defenders was soon exhausted, the buildings were on fire, and Major Von Baring, with the utmost reluctance, was forced to order the handful of his remaining forces to retreat through the garden.

With heroic bravery the Major and his officers stood at their post until the French had actually broken through the gate and entered the house, and only when further resistance would have been certain death did they retreat to the line of the Allies.



LACE MAKERS AT WORK





Before retreating and the exhaustion of ammunition, efforts had been made to extinguish the fire by pouring water from the horse-pond in the courtyard and the well on to the flames out of camp-kettles, but the attempt was unsuccessful.

Major Von Baring's account in brief of the defence of *La Haie Sainte* is of great interest, and we make no excuse for quoting from it.

"Many of my men," he says, "although covered with wounds, could not be induced to keep back. 'As long as our officers fight and we can stand,' was their invariable answer, 'we won't move from the spot.' I should be unjust to the memory of a rifleman named Frederick Lindau if I omitted to mention his brave conduct in particular. He had received two severe wounds on the head, and, moreover, had in his pocket a purseful of gold which he had taken from a French officer. Alike regardless of his wounds and his prize, he stood at a small side-door of the barn, whence he could command with his rifle the great entrance in front of him. Seeing that his bandages were insufficient to stop the profuse bleeding from his wounds, I desired him to retire, but he positively refused, saying, 'A craven is he who would desert you as long as his head is on his shoulders.' Fortunately, this brave fellow—who, after all, to the credit of the defenders of *La Haie Sainte*, was but a type—survived, though he was taken prisoner, and, of course, deprived of his prize.

"As the passage of the house was very narrow, several of my men were overtaken before they could escape. One of these was the Ensign Frank, who had already been wounded. He ran through with his sabre the first man who attacked him, but the next moment his arm was broken by a bullet. He then contrived to escape into one of the rooms and conceal himself behind a bed. Two other men fled into the same room, closely pursued by the French, who exclaimed: 'Pas de pardon à ces brigands verts!'<sup>\*</sup> and shot them down before his eyes. Most fortunately, however, Frank remained undiscovered until the house again fell into our hands at a later hour. As I was now convinced that the garden could not possibly be maintained when the enemy was in possession of the house, I ordered the men to retreat singly to the main position of the army. The enemy, probably satisfied with their success, molested us no further."

\* The men wore green uniforms.—C. H.

The owner of *La Haie Sainte* is a great dairyman, and in his parlour, as we drank glasses of fresh, rich milk and ate the bread and cheese which his wife hospitably pressed upon us, we were shown, with not a little pride, a glazed case containing the medals which the milk of his fine herd of cows, which grazed upon a thousand graves in the rich fields of Waterloo, had brought him at various shows and exhibitions.

From *La Haie Sainte* to the famous Cross Roads is but a few hundred yards, and when one has reached them (near by stands the famous Lion Monument), one is practically in the centre of the area over which the battle was fought. From the top of the pyramidal mound hard by the Cross Roads one can gather, either by means of a good map or by listening to the somewhat flamboyant, though quite interesting, explanations offered by the English or the Belgian guides, who hold forth from early morn till dewy eve in the tourist season to groups of interested visitors, not only the chief points at which the battle was fiercest, but also the dispositions of the French and English forces at the commencement, during the progress, and at the close of the memorable day.

A French writer, Colonel Charras, in his volume—"Le Campagne de 1815"—published many years ago, summed up his opinion of the battle in the following words:

"Wellington, par sa ténacité inébranlable; Blucher, par son activité audacieuse; tout les deux pas l'habileté et l'accord de leurs manœuvres, ont produit ce résultat." That is to say: "Wellington, by his immovable tenacity; Blucher, by his audacious activity; both of them by the cleverness and concertedness of their manœuvres, succeeded in producing the result."

As we rode across the fields of ripe, waving corn, after a survey of the field of battle from the summit of the Lion Monument, to the historic *Château de Hougomont*, partly embosomed in ancient trees, some of which bordered the narrow lane and overhung the lichen-stained and shadowed wall by which the main entrance is approached, larks were singing high above us, and a more peaceful scene it would be difficult to imagine. Over the "fields which have been enriched by the best blood of five nations, and now yield an abundant harvest to peaceful husbandry," had once swept,



almost within the memory of many who dwell there, the warring battalions of fighting men engaged in one of the greatest conflicts of history.

*Hougomont* is the Mecca of many pilgrims; but perhaps its true spirit, its atmosphere, its consuming interest, is only revealed in full to those who have studied its history, and who know its tragic and gallant story. To many who came the day we were last there it was evidently but a show place, to be scampered round, pryed into, and dismissed with the "How extraordinary!" "Is that so?" "You don't mean it!" by which, and similar phrases, the somewhat too loquacious and not too strictly accurate explanatory remarks of the "guide" were punctuated. A "guide," let us add, who seemed to have a genius for editing history to suit the predilections of her hearers—were they English, American, French, German, or native born—and of varying her facts with an astonishing facility.

For example, when pointing out the well in the courtyard (now blocked with rubble and earth, and overgrown with docks and nettles), she (the "guide" was feminine) would say with tragic air, to the listening English, "Mesdames and messieurs, after the battle terrible and ferocious, were found 600 Frenchmen and 200 English in the *puit* (well). Such was the bravery of the *brav* English they killed so many. Marvellous!" And then a quarter of an hour later she would say, whilst explaining to a French party: "There were 800 English and 200 French found at the bottom of the *puit* at the finish of that terrible day, mesdames et messieurs." So is history made!

Of the original, and at the time of the battle very considerable, Château, or manorial farm-house, there is not—owing to the fact of its having caught fire on the late afternoon of the fight—a great deal remaining. A portion of the house near the main gateway, a few of the outbuildings, a fragment of the chapel, the wall surrounding the Château, and that of the garden behind which the brave defenders lay, is nearly all.

What remains of the buildings, including the ruined chapel with its smoke-discoloured wall and crucifix in a wire-netting cage, bear many traces of the memorable siege, and the fierce fighting which here took place. During the day of battle it is estimated that not much less than 15,000

men were engaged in the repeated attempts which were made to capture the Château. Several times bodies of the French (relics of whose presence in the shape of shako buttons and ornaments, metal trimmings from uniforms, pieces of guns, pistols, and swords, have been from time to time unearthed), gained an entry to the orchards and outlying parts of the farm buildings, but failed to carry the main buildings. The loopholes, made by direction of Wellington himself, in the garden walls can still be some of them seen, as can also bullet and cannon-ball marks.

Green turf now covers most of the area of the courtyard in which some of the greatest slaughter took place. Many of the trees forming the thick wood with which the old Château at the time of the battle was surrounded were cut down (never to be replaced) by the fierce cannonade of the enemy, and the answering fire from the English batteries on the northward heights directed against the advancing French attack. But the place, peaceful as it now is, even when seen upon a bright summer day, seemed, at least to us, to wear that indefinable air of underlying tragedy that one often finds associated with ancient and historic buildings.

The old, bent peasant woman, who swept the flags outside the house with feeble arms, remembered the battle—so she said—though upon inquiry she could have been but a year or eighteen months old at most! But she had a pride in this memory which caused her old dim eyes almost to shine, and we did not press this point of infancy home. Who could have done? If we rob the aged of memory we often rob them of the last hold upon life. And such a memory of death, heroism, noise unspeakable, tragedy, and slaughter!

From *Hougomont* back to the Cross Roads through the fields. Then a look in at the *Hôtel du Musée*, where are gathered together many interesting relics (but one cannot easily separate any spurious there may be, from the many undoubtedly genuine), before taking the road once more to Brussels.

This lies past the *Ferme de Mont St. Jean*, hard by which Wellington's reserves were mostly gathered. The farm itself is interesting, and is now much as it was on the night when, by the light of the flickering torches, fitful stars, and swinging lanterns, the wounded were carried in by



CHATEAU D'HOUGOMONT, WATERLOO





scores and hundreds, and laid in the barns, outhouses, and on the wet ground of the courtyard itself for succour. *Mont St. Jean* was less injured than either *La Haie Sainte* or *Hougomont* by the varying fortunes of the battle, and nowadays stands practically as it did when Wellington rode past it along the straight bare road we are travelling, on his way to the village of Waterloo after his historic meeting with Blucher at the *Maison Rouge* or *Maison du Roi*, near *La Belle Alliance*, immediately after the retreat of the French had commenced.

In the straggling village of Waterloo there is not much to detain one, although, of course, it was here that Wellington had his headquarters from the eve of the battle until the day following. In the church there is a fine bust of the Duke, by Geefs, and a large number of marble memorial tablets to the memory of British officers who fell. The building was thoroughly restored in 1855. Close by, in a garden, is a monument which we imagine seldom fails to arouse, as it did in us, quite a different emotion to that intended. It was erected to the memory of the leg of Lord Uxbridge, afterwards the Marquis of Anglesea, who commanded the British cavalry so gallantly at the battle, and underwent amputation of the limb immediately after the fight. The monument, which bears an amusing if appropriate epitaph, is shaded by a weeping willow.

The eleven miles by road, which lie between Waterloo and Brussels, are through picturesque and, in places, well-wooded country, dotted here and there, at first by farmsteads, and afterwards, as the Capital is approached, by pretty villas and châteaux situated amid the woods of Forest and Uccle.

One could scarcely enter Brussels by the south from a more favourable or more pleasant point than at the *Porte de Bal*. But a few hundred yards along the wide, tree-bordered *Boulevard du Midi*, and by turning to the right down the *Boulevard du Hainault*, one is, by that and the fine *Boulevard d'Anspach*, with its magnificent shops, taken, as it were, into the very centre of the best commercial life of the city.

In a word, one stands once more in the heart of Brussels.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE STORY OF MALINES AND ANTWERP

MALINES is a town, if one may believe one's friends who have been to Belgium, generally overlooked at least by the cursory traveller. Situate in a fertile and well-watered district, Malines, or Mechelen, forms, as it were, the apex of a triangle of which the line between Brussels and Louvain forms the base. It can therefore be easily reached from either of the latter cities, but we ourselves took it whilst *en route* for Antwerp, as perhaps this is the most pleasant way to do.

It lies midway between the Belgian capital and its greatest seaport, distant from Brussels some fifteen miles by road, affording a pleasant hour or so's cycle ride through picturesque and well-cultivated, if flat, country. The road is quite a good one, and many, indeed, who do not cycle, walk out from Brussels the seven miles to Vilvorde before taking the train. Vilvorde, an ancient and interesting town on the Senne, possessing an excellent school of horticulture and a parish church, dating from the fourteenth century, and containing some finely carved choir stalls, is quite well worth seeing.

For English visitors at least, Vilvorde possesses an undying interest, owing to the fact that it was here that William Tyndale, reformer and translator of the Bible, suffered martyrdom. Fleeing to the Continent, owing to persecution on account of his heretical doctrines in 1523, he completed his translation of the New Testament from the Greek in the same year, and began to publish it from Cologne, from whence, owing to persecution by the Romanists, he fled to Worms, where the publication of the New Testament was completed two years later. Before long copies of the Scriptures found their way to England, but most, in consequence of



the prohibitions issued against them, were destroyed, concerning which act Tyndale exclaimed: "They have done no other thing than I looked for, and no more shall they do even if they burn me also." Four new editions, however, rapidly found their way into England, notwithstanding the fierce opposition with which the Bible in English was met by Cardinal Wolsey, Sir Thomas More, and others.

At Antwerp, where Tyndale was acting as chaplain to the British merchants settled there, he began in 1529 to publish the first four books of the Old Testament. He was, however, soon afterwards arrested through treachery of a spy, and taken to Vilvorde, where he was cast into prison, and there remained for a period of two years. He was afterwards tried and condemned as a heretic. On October 6, 1536, he was chained to the stake, strangled, and then his body burned to ashes. His last words were: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

His translation of the New Testament, which was quite independent of that of Wycliffe, forms the basis of the Authorized Version, and it is a remarkable fact, as though the prayer of the dying man was heard, that within a year after his martyrdom the Bible was published throughout England by royal command, and appointed to be placed in every church for the use of the people; in most, if not all instances, becoming one of the chained books nowadays so much treasured by churches possessing them.

A little off the main road, between Vilvorde and Weerde, from which latter place the huge tower of the Cathedral of Malines, four miles distant, becomes visible, lie two interesting houses connected with famous Belgian artists. The first is the farm-house of Dry Toren, near the village of Perck, once the residence of David Teniers the younger, whose body was buried in the village church in 1690. The second is near the village of Ellewyt, which lies some two miles to the right of the main road, where stands the old Château of Steen, the summer residence of Rubens in 1635, having been purchased by him for the then large sum of 93,000 florins.

The approach by road to Malines is not without picturesqueness, and for the last four or five miles is dominated by the wonderful though never completed tower of the cathedral Church of St. Rombold. This ancient town of

medieval *Mechlinia*, which as early as the commencement of the tenth century became one of the possessions of the Bishops of Liège, though for many years it had been a portion of the Diocese of Cambrai in ecclesiastical matters, is situate on the tidal river Dyle, which, flowing through the town, by reason of its numerous arms gives it an almost Bruges-like character.

The life of this ancient and most interesting town seems almost centred in the district hard by the railway-station. The rest of it seems but a sleepy place in comparison with the bustle and industrial life of the extensive workshops, rendered necessary by the fact that at Malines intersect several of the most important lines of railway in Belgium—those of Liège, Louvain, Ostend, Brussels to Antwerp, Malines to St. Nicholas.

In the early part of the thirteenth century the town, under the rule of the family of Berthold, who were apparently the hereditary episcopal stewards, gained an almost independent position for itself, as did so many Belgian medieval cities. But in 1332 the town, which had proved very rebellious to outside government, was sold to Count Louis of Flanders by the then Bishop, Adolphe de la Mark, and some years later, in 1369, it was incorporated with Burgundy, becoming in 1473 the City of the Grand Council, which was the supreme tribunal of the Netherlands. It was here that Margaret of York, after the death of her husband, Charles the Bold, took up her abode; and here also lived the children of Maximilian of Austria, one of them, Margaret, who died in 1530, becoming celebrated as the Regent of the Netherlands. When Margaret's successor, Maria of Hungary, in 1546 transferred her Court to Brussels, Malines was made the seat of an archbishopric, apparently as some compensation, and became the ecclesiastical capital of Belgium, which it remains to this day.

The best way to see Malines is undoubtedly to proceed from the Place de la Station, along the Rue Conscience to the Porte d'Egmont, and by way of the Place of the same name across the picturesque and seemingly currentless Dyle, from which one gets a charming view well worthy of the attention of kodakers, and then by way of the Rue Bruel to the Grande Place, around which are grouped some

charming sixteenth and seventeenth century gabled houses, with the ancient Cloth Hall, rebuilt at various times from 1320 onwards, somewhat on the lines of the *Halles* of Bruges. The rather fine statue in the centre of the Grande Place is of Margaret of Austria, and is the work of the native sculptor, Joseph Tuerlincks.

The Hôtel de Ville, which was commenced in the beginning of the fourteenth century, was entirely remodelled and largely rebuilt in 1715, and is, consequently, not of great architectural interest. The fine, though somewhat decayed, Vieux Palais, standing close by and somewhat isolated, is a Gothic building dating from the latter years of the fourteenth century. It was the old *Schepenhuis*, or the House of the Bailiffs, from 1474 to 1618, and the seat of the great Council to which we have already referred. It now contains the valuable municipal archives and the city library. One of the treasures of the former are the account-books of the city onward since the year 1311.

Undoubtedly the most interesting building in the town is the magnificent Cathedral dedicated to St. Rombold, one of the earliest Christian missionaries in the Low Countries, who suffered martyrdom on or near the site of the church on June 24, 775. This saint, who was the successor of Bishop Walraf by the command of an angel visitant, and who, according to the legend, resigned the see after the angel had appeared once more, giving him the command to do so, gave sight to the blind, relieved men of evil spirits possessing them, and, besides raising a young noble to life, did many other miraculous acts. He met his death while reproving a man for his sins. The latter turned upon the saint and killed him with a hoe, which thenceforth became St. Rombold's emblem. After his death, the legend goes that Rombold aided his beloved town when it was besieged, and restored sight and life to many people who were connected with the city. About the commencement of the last century no less than twenty-five paintings of scenes in the life of St. Rombold were found under the whitewash in one of the ambulatory chapels of the Cathedral.

The magnificent and unfinished Late Gothic western tower which dominates the exterior is 324 feet in height, was commenced in 1452, and was intended by its architect



and builders to be the highest in Christendom—namely, 550 feet, or more than 20 feet higher than that of Ulm.

Unlike many edifices of the kind, the Cathedral of Malines does not lose in impressiveness or effectiveness on closer inspection; but, on the contrary, one's admiration for its beauty and its noble proportions is increased by careful consideration of its elegance in detail, and, at least with students of architecture, this feeling is mixed with some surprise at finding so fine a work was commenced in the middle of the fifteenth century, and was not completed till towards the end of the sixteenth. It will be remembered by students that, at least in France and England, Gothic architecture had greatly declined by the middle of the fifteenth century, and that neither in England nor France does our memory serve to bring to mind an example of ecclesiastical architecture of that date which compares in stateliness and grace with this beautiful Cathedral of Malines. Of course, it must be admitted, however, that Gothic art achieved its latest triumphs in the erection of towers which are showy rather than utilitarian structures, and that the building of these was in itself a mark of decadence.

The base of the vast mass of masonry which constitutes the tower is perforated for the great western entrance, and this feature should be specially noted. Some details regarding what is, in many ways, the most remarkable tower in the whole of Belgium may be interesting. Of the structure, which is in two stages, the spire was intended to form a third. Even the materials for it were brought on the ground, when in 1583 the work was arbitrarily stopped by the Prince of Orange, who caused the stones which had been prepared for it to be taken to Holland and used in the building of the town of Willemstad. The two completed stages of the tower are divided by a parapet of pierced work, which marks the place of the platform between the buttresses. A similar parapet crowns the second stage, placed upon a cornice, and follows the form of the buttresses so as to constitute a very beautiful detail of the work. The windows have bold cusped and crocketed hood mouldings, and those of the lower story are very deeply recessed. The wall above these is marked by blind tracery and mullions in the Perpendicular Style, as is the case in similar English buildings. The windows of the upper story rise from the lower parapet

nearly to the cornice, and are divided both longitudinally and transversely by mullions and transoms, whilst above their heads appear blind tracery similar in character to that lower down in the tower. The whole is greatly enriched by the pinnacles and tabernacle work, the details of which are, it must be admitted, florid in character, but do not in any way spoil the composition of the whole.

The church is a cruciform structure 306 feet in length, with the nave 89 feet in height and 40 feet wide; and this great loftiness is such that, enormous as is the height of the tower, from some points of view especially, the latter seems by no means out of proportion to the rest of the church. Many parts of the building, including the tower, have been carefully restored; and it is therefore difficult to describe, and, in some cases, to detect, with any great degree of accuracy, where the original work ends and the new begins.

The church, as a whole, dates from the fifteenth century, and the richest part of the exterior is found at the east end, which was built from the year 1366 onwards till about the middle of the fifteenth century, when the apse was completed in accordance with the original design. The chapels of the ambulatory or choir aisle and those of the east end project considerably beyond the buttresses, and do not merely fill up the space lying between them, as is the most common case in Belgian churches; indeed, the whole part of this work is rather French in character, with deeply recessed windows, the crocketed pyramids with their carved finials, above which appears the light and elegant parapet. The chapels of the choir aisles show carved and moulded gables, crockets, and richly-wrought pinnacles, and the tracery in the windows is very fine geometrical work. Much of the latter is modern, but it has been carefully varied in design, and adds greatly to the beauty of the whole. The buttresses have high pinnacles, with statues placed under canopies on their fronts.

On entering the church one is at once struck by the resemblance that the nave bears in several respects to that of the Church of St. Jacques at Antwerp. It was completed in 1487, or more than a century after the choir.\* The

\* It is only right to point out that much uncertainty appears to prevail as to the dates of the different portions of this cathedral. Van Gestal places the date of the completion of the choir in the year 1227, and the

columns are round, having similar shaped bases, the latter having a water-holding moulding beneath a fillet and above a very bold torus. The great size of these piers is due to successive coatings of plaster, which have effectually hidden the stonework of bluish-grey hue; also that of the arches. The last pillar on the north side of the nave and the arch which it supports has been cleared of the plaster, and now is seen in its original and far more slender dimensions. The red brick which fills in the vault of the apse had on the occasion of our last visit been exposed to view, and it is intended that the whole building shall eventually be cleared of encrustations of plaster, so that its full beauty and its more elegant proportions may be seen and appreciated. The capitals of the columns of the nave, it should be noted, are ornamented with rigid and hard carving, late in its character and contrary to the principles of good design, the foliage is not developed from the stonework of the capital itself, but is merely attached to it. The caps, however, which are octangular in shape, are well and gracefully proportioned to the piers which they surmount, both in respect of height and depth. The clustered columns at the crossing and lower walls of the transept are remains of the beautiful church which was finished in 1312, and burnt to the ground less than thirty years later.

The work of rebuilding appears to have been carried on chiefly by the money raised on the occasion of the Papal Jubilee in the year 1451, and by means of funds produced by Letters of Indulgence granted by Pope Nicholas V. in 1456 to those who should contribute towards the good work. Callixtus III. in 1458, and Pius II. in 1464, raised money in a similar way, the latter also giving a considerable sum out of his own revenues.

Students who are interested in details of architecture will do well to pay attention to the tracery in the clerestory windows of the nave and choir. The northern end of the clerestory dates, some of it, from the fifteenth century.

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consecration of the church as 1312. But it would appear that much later dates given by subsequent writers are probably more correct.

There can be no doubt in the mind of any student that the building presents a typical example of fifteenth-century work. In support of this statement note the great arch beneath the tower leading into the nave, the circular columns, the lofty clerestory, the five-sided apse, with its processional path and radiating chapels, and the great length of the transept.—C. H.





THE EVENING MEAL IN THE BÉGUINAGE



The pulpit, by Boeckstuyns of Malines, dating from 1723, is an example of those elaborate and fanciful "allegories in wood" for which Belgian artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were responsible, and the subject is variously stated to be the conversion of St. Norbert or of St. Paul.

The church contains a considerable number of pictures, few of which, except the altar-piece in the transept, by Van Dyck, and the series of twenty-five coloured pictures, scenes from the life of St. Rombold, specimens of fourteenth or fifteenth century work, are of any great interest or value; although the "Adoration of the Shepherds," by Erasmus Quellin, and "A Last Supper," by Wooters, are worth attention.

The great art treasure of the church is the altar-piece by Van Dyck, which was originally painted for the high altar of the Church of the Recollects. It is undoubtedly one of the finest works of this master, having been painted by him after his return from Italy. The subject is the Crucifixion, and a dead Saviour is seen upon the Cross between two thieves, who are still alive and in agony. St. Mary Magdalene is at the foot of the Cross, her facial expression betokening passionate grief. This figure is worth careful study because of the criticism passed upon the hair by Sir Joshua Reynolds; who, it will be remembered, stated as his opinion that it was too silky-looking, and more like a fabric than human hair.

As one stands before it one can but be conscious of the deep impression made by this fine work, in which the artist has certainly caught in a marvellous way the "atmosphere" accompanying the scene, and has succeeded in conveying it to the mind of the beholder.

Whilst there is nothing else of special note in this Cathedral attractive to the ordinary sightseer, there is undoubtedly a good deal to reward the careful student in the details of its architecture. As a whole, the verdict must be that St. Rombold's is a very noble, spacious and impressive building, which in a large measure is worthy of the high ecclesiastical position that it holds among the cathedrals of Belgium.

Amongst the other churches of Malines which call for notice is that of St. Jean, a Late Gothic structure possessing a well-proportioned western tower with an unusually



picturesque outline. It is a cruciform church possessing a lofty chapel which opens from the eastern side of the north transept, with the choir terminating in an apse with four light windows full of geometrical tracery. The interior is severe and rather uninteresting. The columns of the nave are circular with plain capitals, and there is no arcading between the arches and the clerestory windows, which are filled with Flamboyant tracery.

In the apse is to be found the large Renaissance altar-piece with pictures by Rubens, the subjects of which are "The Adoration of the Magi," "The Beheading of John the Baptist," and "St. John the Evangelist in the Cauldron of Boiling Oil." By many people this high altar-piece is considered one of the best of the painter's ecclesiastical works. The pictures on the outside of the wings are "The Baptism of Christ" and "St. John on the Island of Patmos Writing the Apocalypse." For this it is said that Rubens received 1,800 florins (about £175 English money), the receipt for which, in the artist's own handwriting, is preserved in the sacristy, and the work occupied only eighteen days. There is a small picture of the Crucifixion below the altar-piece, also said to be by this master.

It is interesting to note that one of the kings in the picture of "The Adoration of the Magi" is seen holding a censor, which distinguishes this picture from others which Rubens painted of the same subject.

Originally there were seven other pictures beneath this great altar-piece in addition to the Crucifixion, but these were all carried off to France during the Wars of the Revolution, and were apparently not returned at the time of the general restitution of the works of art which was ultimately made to Belgium by the French authorities.

The confessional-boxes are rather finely carved; and the churchwardens' stalls by the pillars in the transept, the work of Nicholas Van Der Veecken, are worth attention, though only dating from the middle of the eighteenth century.

The Church of Ste. Catherine, which lies to the north-west of St. Jean, is a much more interesting building, and is in the early fifteenth-century style. It possesses a central tower rising only one story above the roofs of the nave, choir, and transepts. The choir roof, which is of slate, and square, is interesting as being somewhat after the character



GRANDE PLACE AND CATHEDRAL, MALINES





of those seen on some of the Sussex and Kent churches in our own land. For the size of the church the interior is remarkably impressive, especially if one enters it from the eastern end. The nave arcade, which has short cylindrical columns ornamented with a single row of foliage on the capitals, is very pleasing. The waggon-shaped roof of wood over the nave, with tie-beams, should be noted, as should also the very beautiful traceried rose window at the west end of the south aisle. Ste. Catherine's provides a good example of the small cruciform town or parish church of the period, and for this reason alone deserves the attention of students.

The very fine Church of Notre Dame, which is on the other side of the Dyle in the opposite quarter of the city, is a finely-proportioned Flamboyant church, built during the period between the commencement and end of the first half of the sixteenth century, and in many respects bears a striking resemblance to the Cathedral. It was erected on the site of an ancient foundation dating from the middle half of the thirteenth century. We learn from an inscription which is to be seen on the north-east pier of the transepts that the first stone of the choir was laid in the year 1500 by Gilles du Bois. The chief points to be noted in the building are the open arcades in front of the passage, the columns in the choir with four slender shafts attached to their circular centres, with unusually fine carved foliage upon the capitals and the portal of the north transept.

There are several fine pictures in this church, among them one may mention "The Last Supper," by Erasmus Quellin, which is surrounded by a Renaissance reredos of enormous size; and, in the chapel behind the high altar, the famous "Miraculous Draught of Fishes," a finely-coloured picture with wings, painted by Rubens in 1618 for the Guild of Fishmongers. For beauty of colouring few of his pictures are more distinguished than this.

But Malines does not rely alone for architectural interest upon its churches, fine though they be, for there are quite a large number of ancient domestic buildings remaining well worth seeing. But many of these are to be found stowed away in obscure corners of one or other of the almost deserted quays, or in by-streets leading from them.

At the corner of the Rue des Vaches and Rue St. Jean,

not far from the church of that name, is the former residence of Canon Busleyden, once the Mont-de-Piété and now the Academy of Music. It forms an interesting example of Gothic domestic architecture of the early sixteenth century, the gables of which are notable and the fine arcades of considerable beauty. The restoration which the house underwent many years ago was so judiciously carried out as to satisfy even the most critical of archæologists.

The *Palais de Justice* or *Gerechtshof*, which stands near the Place St. Pierre and nearly opposite the theatre in the Rue de l'Empereur, is a picturesque and interesting building, skilfully restored some thirty years ago. It was formerly the palace of Margaret of Austria, and from 1561 to 1609 belonged to the Granvellas family, after which for more than a hundred and fifty years it was the seat of the Great Council. The older portions, which are in the Late Gothic Style, date from quite the commencement of the sixteenth century, and the façade, which was built from 1517 to 1526, we found particularly interesting, as it is stated to be the earliest example of the Renaissance in Belgium. The interior is well worth a visit, as it contains some particularly interesting and fine chimneypieces as well as a few works of art of note.

Other less known buildings of interest which are well worth discovering may best be found by taking the following route, having as a starting-place the Grande Place. Crossing the latter to its south-western corner and proceeding down the Bailles de Fer on the south, we come first of all to the *Maison des Archers*, an interesting house, although only dating from the middle of the eighteenth century. There is, however, a fine iron railing dating from the middle of the sixteenth century bordering the canal, which was vaulted over many years ago. The central bridge over the Dyle, built in the thirteenth century, should now be crossed, when, turning to the left, and proceeding along the Zoutwerf or Quai au Sel, one comes to several charming specimens of richly decorated Renaissance houses. One of them, known as *In den Grooten Zalm*, dating from 1530, is the House of the Salmon, the Guild House of the Fishmongers. This was restored in the middle of the nineteenth century, and possesses a very interesting façade and interior, the former having carved friezes, panelling, pilasters, and arcades, on

which are sculptured sea gods and goddesses, fishes, and similar subjects. The so-called *Lepelaer* a little further along beyond two rather tumbledown timber houses, has some exquisite details in the Franco-Flemish style.

It will now be easiest and most economical of time to take one of the by-streets on the right hand and strike into the Rue Notre Dame, and proceeding north-westwards to reach the *Marché aux Grains*. Here is the *Maison de la Grande Arbalète*, or the Guild House of the Crossbowmen, dating from the sixteenth century, but with a façade erected at the commencement of the seventeenth.

Along the Rue Haute stands the *Porte de Bruxelles*, the sole survival of the twelve ancient city gates. It has, however, lost much of its original character owing to its having been rebuilt in the seventeenth century.

A pleasant way to reach the other quays along the Dyle, on which here and there interesting houses are to be found, is to leave the *Porte de Bruxelles* on the left and proceed by the tree-shaded Boulevard des Capucines till one comes to the *Porte d'Adeghe*, from which point one is able to reach the waterside again by the second street on the left, and walking along by the Dyle, one comes to the Quai aux Avoines, or Haverwerf, on which there are two ancient and interesting houses overlooking the now almost deserted waterway with its Venetian-like posts sticking up in the water, to which anciently barges were moored. At the corner of the Rue de la Grue is the so-called Paradise, with its two painted reliefs of the Fall and Expulsion of the First Parents from Eden. Close by is the *Maison de Diable* a fine timbered house of the sixteenth century, the front of which is full of quaint carvings, the pillars on either side of the door having a boy statuette holding a shield. On the sides of the windows of the first story appear satyrs and on the mullions a faun, all grinning. On the second tier are a series of nine quaint brackets, placed between the windows and carved with grotesque figures of warriors, a king and a queen, etc., whilst the verge board shows a seraph at each foot.

Near by is another house, on the front of which is a curious carving of God and Christ, and the date 1669, which refers to the upper part.

In the neighbourhood of these narrow waterways many



other ancient and too often, alas! ruinous buildings and fragments of Gothic and Renaissance architecture may be found by the enterprising explorer. It may truly be said, we think, that scarcely any city in Belgium is so rich as Malines in quaint buildings—Gothic, Renaissance, and what we call Jacobean houses.

Malines has, of course, for centuries been celebrated for the exquisite lace which is manufactured in the city and environs. Some of the best of the ancient lace which the skilful fingers of long-dead *dentellières* have produced is almost priceless, and even that of to-day is, much of it, very costly.

In many of the houses of that quarter of the city which lies north-west of the Cathedral the *dentellières* still work at their beautiful and fascinating calling. Old women, whose failing eyesight needs the reinforcement of spectacles perched upon the end of their noses, sit in the windows or in the courtyards of their dwellings, pillow and bobbins in front of them, and, with fingers scarcely less speedy or skilful than of yore, weave the intricate and exquisite lace in fine white threads from the pattern pinned upon the cushion in front of them. Many young girls, and even comparatively small children, are also to be seen in the villages on the outskirts of the city engaged in this beautiful industry.

Unfortunately, one of the best of the older schools, situate in the Rue des Douze Apôtres in the district of the *Béguinage* has, of late years, met with less support than it deserves, and on the occasion of our recent visit we found the ancient lady who presides over the institution in dire distress concerning the bad times which had overtaken it. But although many of the girls had had to be turned off, and other pupils did not seem to be forthcoming, we saw some exquisite specimens of lace in process of making, including a beautiful *couvre-pieds* to be given as a wedding-present to one of the Bourbon princesses, the value of which, when completed, would be many hundreds of pounds. As a contrast to this, and also to a handkerchief-border priced at 2,000 francs, was an almost equally fine, though very narrow, strip of lace costing no more than 5 francs the metre, which would probably have fetched in Regent Street three times as much per yard at the very least.

But if one wants to see lace-making under the most



A COURTYARD, MALINES





picturesque conditions, one should ride out a few miles beyond the city into the country, where in almost every cottage some member of the family seems engaged in the occupation. It is here that one finds in the summer-time, seated upon low stools at cottage doors or in gardens gay with homely flowers, the mothers and daughters of the family with the lace pillows on their knees, singing at their work the musical old "Song of the Lacemakers of the Bruges Country," which runs as follows :

" Lorsque nous travaillons  
Ensemble nous chantons,  
Et à nos chants d'allégresse  
Chassent notre Paresse.

" Nous chantons le Seigneur,  
Et notre chant le prie ;  
Nous chantons en l'honneur  
De la Vierge Marie.

" Sainte Anne nous chantons  
Maîtresse, enfants prions  
Pour elle la couronne ;  
Elle est notre patronne."

And as one passes along the highways and by-ways of Flanders, whenever the musical, though somewhat dirge-like, song comes to one upon the air, one knows that there are busy fingers flying backwards and forwards across the cushion, and that the bobbins are clicking a sharp accompaniment to the voices of the singers.

From Malines on to Antwerp is but a trifle over an hour's riding for any save the least expert of cyclists, so good is the road. Poplar-bordered roads, flat and well-cultivated fields, with here and there a small town or scattered village, and now and again a vista of picturesque groups of peasants working in the fields, or the tower of a distant church, provides scenery differing very little in character from what may be called a typical Flanders landscape. But some miles before one reaches the *Porte de Malines*, and, crossing the moat, passes through the ramparts into the city, one realizes that one is approaching a great town of ceaseless activity. And soon, as one cycles along the wide *Chaussée des Berchem* and *Chaussée de Malines* on one's way to the very heart of the city, one receives a vivid impression, be the day sunny (as it was in our case) or cloudy, of ceaseless life, activity, and of prosperity.

Antwerp, the ancient and ultimately successful rival of Bruges, and, in a manner, of Ghent, with a population of nearly 400,000, including its suburbs, is, one at once realizes, admirably situated for commerce, standing as it does upon the banks of the broad and easily navigable Scheldt, though fifty miles from the open sea. It has long been one of the great seaports of Europe, envied by Germany,\* and used by her as an outlet for her overseas commerce, and, in a sense, is the great depôt of all Belgian trade. It is the Naboth's vineyard of the German Chancellerie.

Its population, with the exception of the 40,000 members of the foreign colony, about half of whom are Dutch, a quarter German, and, of the remainder, quite a number English, is Flemish.

The history of the town as a place reaches back far into the seventh century. Destroyed by the Northmen towards the middle of the ninth century, Antwerp appears as the capital of a Margravate, or countship, established as a protection to the German frontier against the then all-powerful Counts of Flanders, about the beginning of the eleventh century. The most celebrated of all these Margraves of Antwerp was the famous Godfrey de Bouillon, who, in 1095, sold Belgium, then a Duchy, to Albert, Bishop of Liège, to enable him to raise funds for the Crusade, one of the results of which was the taking of Jerusalem by assault on July 15, 1099, and the proclamation of Godfrey de Bouillon as King.

Favoured by its situation, so admirably adapted for the development of the town itself and of the commerce by which it was to be ultimately raised to its proud position in medieval and in modern times, its size and wealth greatly increased at the close of the fifteenth century, when, as we have already seen, much of the trade of its great rival, Bruges, was, for several reasons, transferred to it. But its progress prior to the fourteenth century was menaced and retarded by the very circumstances of its situation, which was afterwards to prove so advantageous. The wide river,

\* The proposed new fortifications of Flushing—much of the money for which is said, and we believe not without reason, to have been indirectly supplied by German capitalists—are the subject of considerable apprehension in Antwerp commercial and shipping circles. That their construction would constitute a menace to its trade no one can doubt.—C. H.

easily navigated, exposed it to the attack of every piratical passer-by—Northmen, Scandinavians, Danes, by whatever name they were called—all at one period or another seem to have sailed their galleys up the wide, placidly-flowing Scheldt to attack and plunder the struggling town rising upon its banks.

It was for this reason not until the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when affairs in Northern Europe became less disturbed, that Antwerp began to grow and give promise of its ultimate greatness. But the golden age of the city was the latter end of the fifteenth and earlier part of the sixteenth centuries, when, Bruges declining, from the causes which will be duly touched upon, Antwerp rose with almost meteoric suddenness to the first position as a trading port in the Low Countries. Its wide, deep, and comparatively slow-flowing river rendered it more suitable for the increased size of the shipping of the new era that had then opened than the shallow and narrow canals and rivers of Ghent, Bruges, and Brussels. This fact enabled it, on the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, to monopolize the greater part of the new seaborne commerce, as well as that between the ports of Spain and Portugal and Central Europe, and for a long period the Scheldt became for the time what the Thames, the Clyde, the Mersey, and Southampton Water have become in our own era.

The Emperor Charles V. afforded the town powerful protection, and during his time it became the most prosperous and wealthy city on the Continent, not even excepting Venice and Genoa, whose fame in the earlier Middle Ages was world-wide and unrivalled.

A picture of Antwerp at the very height of its prosperity in the middle of the sixteenth century, when the small town had grown to a vast city of some 130,000 inhabitants, would have shown vessels alongside wharves, or moored in mid-stream, from every part of the then civilized world, and at one time an old writer states it was no unusual occurrence for a hundred vessels to arrive and depart daily. Here, too, were held those great fairs which, during the Middle Ages, served to attract merchants to the towns holding them from all parts, however distant, of the civilized world. Antwerp was even the scene of the banking operations of one of the famous Fuggers, the merchant princes of Augsburg, who



ultimately died, leaving a fortune of nearly two million ducats, or, at a present-day valuation, a million and a quarter sterling. In the middle of the sixteenth century,\* the spices and sugar alone which were imported into Antwerp from Portugal reached the enormous value of one and a half million ducats. Double this amount scarcely covered that of the silk and gold embroideries sent to the city from Italy; and grain from the Baltic was imported to the value of one and a half million ducats; French and German wine a million ducats more, and general imports from England totalled twelve million ducats, or, say, over three million pounds. These figures will give some idea of the vast character of the trade of this medieval port, at which upwards of a thousand foreign commercial firms had by then, we are told, established themselves. From this centre flowed out many million ducats' worth of Flemish manufactured articles—cloth, carpets, linen, gold and silver wares, carvings, and raw flax. The high esteem in which these things were held in foreign lands will be easily understood when one remembers that such remote countries as Persia, India, and Arabia were customers of the merchant princes of Antwerp.

The city's decline began with great rapidity soon after it had reached its zenith as a trading-port and commercial centre of the Middle Ages. After the destruction of churches and convents in 1566, in the reign of Philip II., by the iconoclasts, a bitter persecution instituted by the Duke of Parma was the cause of the immigration of thousands of industrious citizens and skilled workers from the country upon which Spain was seeking to plant a crushing, iron heel. Many of them, as we know, fled to England, and to them may be not improperly ascribed much of the stimulation which came to English commerce about this period, particularly in the matter of silk and woollen factories, which were speedily established in various parts of the country.

Antwerp suffered terribly from outrage and pillage by the cruel Spanish soldiery, which began in 1576 during the unsuccessful attempt of the southern provinces of the Netherlands to shake off the yoke of Spain. It was in the

\* Guicciardini, a learned Florentine, who died in 1589, and who was for some years Tuscan Ambassador in the Netherlands, is our authority.  
—C. H.



DUTCH HOUSES AND QUAI, MALINES





year mentioned that the central part of the city, including the ancient Town Hall and nearly a thousand magnificent buildings, were burnt, and upwards of 7,500 of its inhabitants were slain in the streets by fire and sword—the St. Bartholomew of the Netherlands. On its surrender to the Duke Alexander of Parma, after a siege of fourteen months, the population had been reduced from 130,000 to less than 85,000, and but four years later this had further decreased by nearly 30,000 souls. The trade of Antwerp was almost ruined.

Then came the rapid commercial rise of the Dutch and their chief port, Amsterdam, after the union of the Seven Provinces. The Dutch erected forts on their own territory at the mouth of the Scheldt;\* and by the Peace of Westphalia the river was finally shut to seagoing vessels in the year 1648, the terms of the Treaty of Münster of the same year being that no seagoing vessel should pass by the Scheldt to Antwerp, but that all should unload at a Dutch port, trans-shipping their cargo, which should then be forwarded by river craft to the former capital of Belgian commerce.

In consequence, Antwerp continued to gradually decline for more than a century, and it was not until the end came to the Austrian rule that the city once more commenced to take its place as one of the great and flourishing ports of Northern Europe.

In 1794 the French, by the Treaty of the Hague, succeeded in forcing Holland to abandon the system of dues levied on vessels bound for Antwerp, which had for nearly a century and a half done so much to cripple the trade of the once flourishing city. And Napoleon I., recognizing the importance of the town from a strategic point of view, undertook great harbour works and new quays, which were constructed in the first two or three years of the nineteenth century. So much was the trade of the town improved by these two means—the removal of the Dutch forts at the entrance to the Scheldt, and the dues which had been levied upon all vessels, that in 1805 upwards of 2,500 vessels of a tonnage amounting in the aggregate to nearly 150,000 tons, entered the new port of Antwerp. And it is not to be wondered at that this revival of the shipping trade had a wonderful effect upon the general commerce of the city.

\* In this respect history seems likely to repeat itself, with what commercial and political results one cannot at present say.—C. H.

In 1814 the Allies advanced against the town, which was defended by Carnot, but was ultimately surrendered to the British under General Graham. On the fall of Napoleon it was incorporated with the newly-constituted Kingdom of the Netherlands, and from that time onward began to trade as a Dutch seaport.

By the constitution of Belgium into a separate kingdom in 1830, the city once more suffered severely in its trade. The citizens had taken part in the Revolution greatly against their own free will, and most of their trade was for a time diverted to Rotterdam and Amsterdam. The town was occupied by the Belgian insurgents and bombarded from the southern citadel by the Dutch general Chasse, who two years later, in his turn, was besieged by the French for a period of two months. The Dutch once more instituted their unjust practice of levying tolls on the shipping coming to Antwerp, and this, perhaps, had more to do than the Revolutionary disturbances with the setback the city received. For nearly thirty years the trade of Antwerp was more or less stationary, and it was not until 1863 that the right of levying navigation dues on the shipping entering the Scheldt, which had been granted to Holland by the peace of 1839, was commuted by a payment of 36,000,000 francs, of which sum Belgium paid one-third and the remainder was paid by the other Powers interested.

Thus once more was this great city, which is, after all, the natural outlet of the Scheldt—and, indeed, it is not too much to say to a large extent of the German Empire itself—placed on the highroad to regain its lost position as one of the great ports of Europe. Onward from that time the commerce of the city has regularly, and even rapidly, increased, and a large number of German and other foreign merchants have settled on the banks of the Scheldt.

The great import trade of Antwerp is very much what it was formerly as regards the articles. The chief industries of the city otherwise than those connected directly with shipping are diamond-cutting, cigar-making, lace-making, sugar refining, brewing and distilling. Antwerp is also, be it noted, a large emigration port from the Continent. For some years past the average number of emigrants leaving it for other countries annually is upwards of 70,000.

Antwerp, too, is the principal arsenal of Belgium, and it

is also one of the strongest fortresses in Europe, although to the casual and unskilled observer there may be few evidences of this fact. Both the city and the river are defended by a number of isolated and outlying forts, constructed with extraordinary skill, as well as by broad and massive ramparts which are upwards of ten miles in length. How far the latter would prove impregnable to modern artillery and methods in event of attack only experts can conjecture. But not the least interesting of the various means of defence that have been devised is that by which a considerable portion of the suburbs of the city and the district immediately outside them can be almost instantaneously flooded. Antwerp, it should be also noted, has been for some years past provisioned and prepared to be the rendezvous of the Belgian Army in the event of the neutrality of the country being violated, and the Belgian forces compelled to retreat before the enemy. Military authorities calculate that to besiege Antwerp successfully an army of nearly 300,000 men, with a proper complement of artillery, would be necessary, and that so perfectly would the city be provisioned by depôts and other sources that fully a year would be required ere it could be starved into submission.

Antwerp, now the scene of bustling commerce and active municipal life, with huge docks, wharves, and quays stretching for several miles down the right bank of the Scheldt, in many respects reminds the visitor of Liverpool and the Mersey. It is true, of course, that the Scheldt—although at times visited by fogs, as is the Mersey—on bright summer days has a picturesqueness and clarity of atmosphere that the latter stream seldom enjoys, and that the quays and wharves have characteristics which differentiate them from those of its English counterpart, but nevertheless the parallel is not a strained nor an inapt one. Certainly Antwerp forms one of the most interesting of Belgian cities of to-day, and although year by year the growth of the suburbs serves more and more to dwarf the comparatively small element of medievalism still remaining, there are yet to be found not a few old corners and buildings other than the well-known public ones of interest and possessing architectural charm. If for no other reason than its possession of many masterpieces of the painter's art, the work of Rubens, the Van Dycks, Teniers, Quentin Matsys, Jordaens, Seghers, and



others, who all in past times lived and worked here, Antwerp would have a great attraction for the student and all lovers of the art of painting, in which the city stood so high during the seventeenth century, and even may be said to have then enjoyed pre-eminence.

The men of the modern schools of art working in Antwerp, whose names will be familiar to most students—we mean such artists as Mattheus Ignatius Van Brel, Ferdinand de Braekeleer, among the followers of the Academic School; Gustave Wappers, Nicaise de Keyser, Ernest Slingeneyer, Hendrik Leys, Joseph Lies, Albrecht de Vriendt, Henri de Braekeleer, J. B. Kindermans, Adrien Joseph Heymans, Jan Stobbaerts, and Alexander Struys, to mention only a few.

Antwerp may be truly called a Flemish city, whilst Brussels, on the other hand, might almost be called a little Paris. Few things strike the student of character and society more forcibly in Antwerp than the Flemish sentiment, which is apparent when once one becomes on intimate terms with any friends or acquaintances. Flemish is generally spoken, not alone by the common folk, but by many people of the middle and upper-middle classes, although, of course, the latter can, and do when necessary, speak French, and the latter tongue is the language of the greater commercial houses and all matters to do with the government of the town. On the other hand, in Brussels French is much more frequently spoken even by the common people, and is almost universally so in the homes of the better class.

As might perhaps be anticipated when one remembers the history of Antwerp, most of the surviving portions of the older town are to be found within a comparatively small radius of the Cathedral and the Place Verte. Each ring or extension of this original central town, some of the surviving buildings of which date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as is the case of trees, marks distinctly an era of growth, removes one further from the historic portion of the city. The suburbs, although many of them are interesting as showing the growth of a great modern municipality, have little or no historical interest, and therefore those who wish to have, as it were, the most archæologically and architecturally interesting part of Antwerp beneath their eye, should choose as their abiding-place one of the hotels (of which there are quite a number) in the neighbourhood of the

charming and tree-shadowed Place Verte, which in many respects may be called the centre of the city's life.

It should be noted here, however, that care should be taken regarding the hotel chosen, as some frequented by the foreign and fast element of the city are very undesirable places of residence for the average tourist. The high prices charged for accommodation do not—in these cases at any rate—mean a corresponding amount of comfort, attention, or quiet—generally, indeed, the reverse.

On the southern side of the square are one or two hotels from which beautiful views of the spire of the Cathedral can be had across a miniature forest of trees. And, indeed, to have a room overlooking this charming Place Verte is to enable one to study much of the social and some of the commercial life of Antwerp at one's leisure. Especially is this the case upon a Sunday morning, when through the square, past the flower-stalls which beautify the Cathedral side of it, pass streams of worshippers and holiday-makers of all grades of society, from the wharfingers to the prosperous merchants and bankers, and the *petites marchandes des rues* up to the merchant princes' wives and daughters, and members of the higher ranks of society, whose ancestors fought against the Spaniards, and were known in the days when Antwerp became great upon the stolen commerce of Bruges.

Besides, from the Place Verte it is but a short walk to the riverside, with its delightful promenades approached by slopes and raised above the level of the wharves and quays, frequented by all types of Antwerp citizens, their wives and children, and affording a magnificent view of the river and the flat stretch of green fields and marshes on the other shore.

Antwerp is not unjustly proud of its beautiful Cathedral of Notre Dame, which stands just beyond the north-western corner of the Place Verte. Although this largest, and by some considered the most beautiful, Gothic church in the Netherlands is still known as the Cathedral, it now no longer contains the seat of a bishop, but forms part of the Diocese of Malines. Although it is an extremely fine example of Early and Middle Gothic architecture—the tower is Late Gothic or Flamboyant in style—it is, perhaps, at first sight, externally at all events, somewhat disappointing. One reason for this undoubtedly arises from the fact that it is

unfortunately shut in by many houses of quite a mean character. And for this reason the full beauty of the building is not seen from the Place Verte, which as an open space should naturally form a splendid approach to it. The spire has come in for a good deal of latter-day criticism. We read in one authority that it is "gingerbread-like and meretricious"; in another that it is "overladen with ornament, and looks cheap and tawdry." Neither one nor the other criticism we have quoted will, we fancy, be accepted as final or as just by those for whom Late Gothic architecture, with its beauty of tracery and ornament, possesses a greater attraction than the earlier and severer forms of the same period.

The most conspicuous portion of the exterior, other than the spire, seen from the Place Verte, is the beautiful chief portal, which has been of recent years carefully restored, and the south transept. There is little sculpture on them with the exception of a small figure of the Virgin with the Child, placed high up in the gable end. To view the west front one must go round into the little *Marché aux Gants*, whence one has a view of the fine central portal and the west window, flanked by the two great towers, the southernmost of which is unhappily incomplete.

There is an interesting well in this little *Marché aux Gants*, over which is a beautiful wrought-iron canopy generally attributed to Quentin Matsys, who, it will be remembered, was a metal worker, if not a blacksmith, before he became a great artist. The design of this great canopy is full of legendary lore, containing, as it does, the figure of Brabbau, who seems to have been a legendary deity or personage, chiefly called into existence for the purpose of accounting for the place-name Brabant.

In the trellis of a vine which forms a part of the design are to be seen men and women of prehistoric times, armed with clubs and other primitive weapons.

The northern side of the Cathedral, it must be admitted, has been rather over much restored.

The Cathedral is of cruciform shape, with triple aisles and ambulatory, and it is generally supposed to have been commenced in the year 1352 under the direction of Jean Amel, or Appelmans, a native of Boulogne, his son, Peter, continuing the work after his death in 1398.





THE PLACE VERTE AND RUBENS MONUMENT, ANTWERP



In 1434 a new mind—that of Jean Tak—was brought to bear upon the structure, and only a few years later, in 1449, one Master Everaert took over the superintendence of the great work. To this period—that is to say, from the middle of the fourteenth to the middle of the fifteenth century—the choir, with its ambulatory and chapel, the sacristies, and the tower as far up as the first gallery, belong. The aisles were built during the period covered by the first quarter of the fifteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century, when the building operations were under the direction of Herman de Waghemaker and his son Dominic. To them are generally ascribed the dome above the crossing and the Late Gothic of the upper portion of the northern tower, the final pinnacle of which was probably added about 1592. The southern tower was never finished, and the work upon it was abandoned in 1474, when only about a third of the originally contemplated structure had been completed.

In the year 1533 the church was very seriously damaged by fire, and suffered thirty-three years later from the fanaticism of the iconoclasts. Once again it was greatly damaged by vandalism during the occupation of the country by the French Republican forces in 1794.

A more or less thorough restoration of the building on a large scale was commenced in the year 1867 under the direction of François André de Durllet, a native of the city, and has been continued until the present time with more or less interruption.

The interior of the Cathedral is one of considerable beauty and of great size and impressiveness, the perspective of its six aisles affording a charming vista. The extreme length is 384 feet; the width of nave 171 feet, of transept 212 feet; and the height 130 feet. Broadly speaking, a general plan seems to have been adhered to throughout, notwithstanding the fact that the work of building was extended over a period covering nearly two centuries. Thus the whole presents a tolerably uniform aspect, and though its parts differ in detail, they are, notwithstanding this, homogeneous in form. The roof is sustained by no less than 125 pillars, if they can be so described, which have no capitals, and constitute a marvellous assemblage of shafts that exhibit a continuous impost. This characteristic, to many observers, gives the interior a not entirely pleasing aspect. But it must be



remembered that the actual appearance of the edifice does not entirely nor fairly represent the architect's intention, inasmuch as the altitude of the piers is considerably less than was originally the case, the floor level having been altered more than once. About the middle of the eighteenth century the latter was raised no less than 2 feet, this causing the bases of the piers to be hidden, and the effect has, of course, been very disastrous. The reason assigned for this most unfortunate act was that the ground outside the building had been gradually raised; but this, one would have thought, should not have been sufficient excuse for disturbing the then existing beautiful proportions.

Quite independently of its great size and impressiveness, the Cathedral is celebrated from the fact that it has a nave of six aisles, three of them on each side, giving to it an extremely striking appearance. On entering, the effect on one is peculiar. This is caused chiefly from the apparently interminable forest of pillars which stretch themselves out on either hand, and from the constancy with which the continuous impost has been used. A feature that at once strikes one is the absence of a choir-screen in a country where screens of a lofty character are most frequent, but the absence adds much to the beauty of the vista.

The interior is almost bare of decorative sculptures, and it is happily free from those vulgar statues of Apostles so frequently found placed against the pillars of the nave.

The absence of a triforium and the consequent proximity of the arcade and clerestory give a rather modern and non-Gothic touch to the nave as it stretches out before one. And although the continuous imposts of the pillars of the intermediate aisles serve to enhance the elegance which they derive from their slender proportions—the comparatively low roof of the nave, the equal division of its bays in the arcade and clerestory, the absence of carvings, capitals to the pillars, etc., throughout, and, in addition, the poor forms of the archivolt mouldings, serve to produce an effect which is not worthy of the greatness and costliness of the building as a whole.

One realizes in noticing these things how greatly the art of architecture had decayed when the church was erected. Also how at that time much account was placed upon mere size, and that the spirit of Gothic architecture and design

was decaying when frequent and monotonous repetition of parts and details were tolerated in such a building as this Cathedral.

The medieval rood-loft was destroyed in 1556 at the time the church was so greatly damaged by the fanaticism of the *Gueux*, who smashed its richly-sculptured altars, broke much stained glass, and destroyed a great many of the figures adorning the porches.

The choir-stalls, filling the first two bays on either side, were placed there between 1844 and 1847, and although some of their details are interesting and praiseworthy, their design is quite in antagonism to all ecclesiastical tradition. In 1860 the stalls were finished by the famous Louvain sculptor, Karel Hendrick Geerts, and his elaborate and beautifully-carved groups and statues should on no account be missed by the lover or student of good carving. The beautiful and imaginative handiwork of Geerts has done much to remove the impression of poverty and bareness which the stall work originally gave. And this is now one of the most splendid monuments to be met with anywhere of the revival of medieval art.

The high altar-piece in the choir, placed at the chord of the apse, is a very fine example of Early Renaissance work and taste; but its size is such as to serve to diminish the scale of the choir, and the five arches opening into the procession path are entirely hidden by it. This altar-piece is enriched by the great masterpiece of Rubens—"The Assumption," painted in 1626—and of all the creations of the artist perhaps there is none other which more thoroughly exhibits his great grasp of religious decorative art. It certainly ranks as a work with that having the same subject now to be seen in the Imperial Museum at Vienna, and is one of the best of the ten pictures the artist painted, all having the same subject, none of which, it is an interesting matter to note, except this one, are in the places the artist originally intended they should occupy. The work, of course, is seen at a considerable distance, and every outline of the picture is instinct with light, so that the central figure of the Virgin is seen ascending in a dazzling glory, so far as our knowledge goes, unequalled by the work of any other painter. The Virgin is caught up into the air by a circle of little cherubs, whilst below stand the Apostles gazing into the empty tomb, and

the centre of the foreground is occupied by the holy women, about to pluck roses from the latter.

The Cathedral is famous for its artistic treasures, and before we come to an examination of the other works of this great master, it will be well, perhaps, to mention a few of the smaller works of art which should not be overlooked. In the south aisle, for example, there are some modern Stations of the Cross by Vinck and Hendricks of really admirable character, and painted in the right and not the ultra-modern spirit. Each one is quite worthy careful examination, although, of course, many visitors are, we were told, inclined to overlook them by reason of their modernity. The Chapel of the Sacrament, which is at the end of the south aisle, contains some fine stained-glass windows dating from the early part of the sixteenth century, the subjects of which are the Last Supper, St. Amand converting Antwerp, and St. Norbert preaching against the heresy of Tanchelinus at Antwerp.

In the south transept, from which one can get very pleasing vistas of the central dome and aisles, is a good modern stained-glass window, and on the south wall are two pictures, "The Last Supper," by Otto Van Veem, of whom Rubens learned painting, formerly on the altar in the Chapel of the Sacrament, and the "Marriage at Cana in Galilee," painted for the altar of the wine merchants by De Vos. On the left wall of the south transept is hung Rubens' great triptych, better known as "The Descent from the Cross." The story of how this wonderful picture came to be painted is not without interest.\* It runs that at the request of Albert and Isabella, then Governors of the Low Countries, the artist agreed to reside in Antwerp, and, to enable himself to do this, built a house and studio, which trespassed on land belonging to the Company of Arquebusiers, who, in consequence, went to law with him. Unwilling to be mulcted in monetary damages, and by way of compromising the situation, Rubens agreed to paint the Guild a picture of St. Christopher, whose name, of course, signifies Bearer of Christ, who was the patron saint of the Arquebusiers. The artist did it after his most magnificent fashion, and illustrated the subject in four ways by this famous triptych and the

\* It is necessary to state that there are several versions of this incident, of which the one given appears to be the best authenticated.—C. H.





A STREET SCENE IN ANTWERP



picture on its exterior. In the pictures within the shutters Mary, on the left hand, is seen in the subject of the Visitation, the central picture being the "Descent from the Cross," with the dead Christ borne by Joseph of Arimathea and the disciples, and the right-hand panel showing the presentation in the Temple, where the living Christ is borne in the arms of Simeon. There is a tradition in connection with this work that Van Dyck was chosen by his terrified companions to retouch the neck and chin of the Virgin which had been damaged in a studio fracas, and that Rubens considered the work to be so good that he let it stand. The picture was placed in position in 1612, and forms the greatest treasure of the Cathedral.

The outer shutters of the work are seldom seen nowadays, although the sacristan will usually, as he did in our case, close them on request, when the figure of St. Christopher, and the hermit with his owl and lantern directing the saint to Christ, is seen, as is also the case in the earlier St. Christopher triptych by Memlinc in the Academy at Bruges.

There have been many criticisms published upon this famous painting regarding its merits merely as a work of art, from a more or less technical point of view, and as a composition teaching a lesson or impressing the beholder. For ourselves, we must admit that, whilst realizing the splendour and gorgeousness of the conception and colour, and the great technical skill which the painter exhibits in overcoming mechanical difficulties, the impression made upon our mind was not so much one of sentiment and spiritual grandeur as arousing in one a sense of the wonderful skill and genius of the painter himself. On the whole, the rendering of the idea seems to lack pathos and even nobility. There are several small details where one's idea of fitness is shocked, but some of the faces, especially those of Mary Magdalene and St. John, are perfectly delightful.

In the second chapel of the ambulatory is the tomb of John Moretus, son-in-law of the renowned Plantin, with pictures painted by Rubens, who was a friend of the famous printer, for the tomb. The portrait of John Moretus above the latter is supposed to have been painted by a pupil, retouched by Rubens himself. The triptych has for its



subject the Resurrection ; of course, emblematic of hope for the future of Moretus.

Most of the chapels of the ambulatory contain works of art, stained glass, or tombs, worthy of notice, but for which there is no space for detailed description here.

On the back of the high altar opposite the sixth chapel are some extraordinary painted imitations of reliefs by Van Brey, and near them the tomb of Isabella of Bourbon, the wife of Charles the Bold and mother of Mary of Burgundy.

Many of the chapels contain fine altar-pieces, generally modern, but of archaic design. In the north transept and on the right wall is found Rubens' famous "Elevation of the Cross," in the form of a triptych, but with the main idea continuing through the three pictures. Although this work exhibits in the strongest light some of the most individual features of the artist's style, it cannot be said that Rubens in it reached to the higher and spiritual attainment of sacred art. The figure of Christ is undoubtedly effective, and the chiaroscuro is excellent whereby the great central mass of light is increased in value by the flesh-tints of the Saviour's body, so that it seems to come into tone with the powerful scarlet of the old man's robe and with other surrounding parts. Every critic, we fancy, would admit the triumphs over technical difficulties which the painter has thus achieved, but some of the figures strike one as very coarse, and the attitudes as extravagant, and even out of place, especially the contorted figure at the foot of the Cross. In the right wing, however, one finds much that is charming and natural, especially in the figures of the Virgin and St. John. The colouring of these is, indeed, really wonderful, and typical of Rubens at his best.

Technically speaking, of course, the workmanship of the whole triptych—the colouring, the modelling, etc.—are almost beyond criticism. But the coarseness of many of the figures conveys to one's mind the ineffaceable impression that Rubens lacked spirituality and the sentiment necessary to deal with sacred and pathetic subjects. This picture, the prevailing colour of which is brown, and the tone cold, was formerly the altar-piece of the Church of Ste. Walburga, a representation of whom is seen on the outer shutters among other saints.

These, then, are the principal art treasures of this

Cathedral, which is wonderfully rich in this respect. In the nave there is a seventeenth-century pulpit of elaborate design, at first sight the subject of which appears to be the four continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America.

Antwerp possesses several other fine and interesting churches, for a brief description of the chief of which, St. Jacques and St. Paul, we must surely find a place.

The former is, on the whole, most easily and best reached on foot from the Cathedral by way of the *Marché au Lait*, along the Courte Rue Neuve and the Longue Rue Neuve; about midway down the latter, at the corner of the Rue St. Jacques, stands the church. Ere we reach it we pass the extremely ornamental Bourse, reached from the Longue Rue Neuve by the Rue de la Bourse, which was built by Joseph Schadde to replace the fine Late Gothic building erected in 1531 by Dominicus de Waghemaker. This ancient building, which was almost destroyed in 1581 by fire, the remains being burned down again in 1858, was the oldest Exchange in Europe. The new edifice, which is in modern Late Gothic, following out the original design of the sixteenth century, but on a much larger scale, is much more picturesque and artistic than is generally the case with buildings of the kind. The walls are decorated with the arms of Antwerp and of the different provinces of Belgium, and the Belgian lion, whilst in the angles between the arches are to be found the arms of the chief seafaring nations.

The Church of St. Jacques, which is well-proportioned and cruciform in plan, unfortunately suffers, as does the Cathedral itself, from its environment, if of not exactly mean streets, decidedly commonplace, and even mean-looking, houses. It possesses a magnificently solid-looking, but unfinished, western tower. The style of the church is the latter period of the Pointed, from about 1479-1505, but, like the Cathedral itself, is distinguished by the great simplicity of its arrangement and details. There are, however, many works of sculpture in it of great merit from the hands of various distinguished Flemish artists.

The general effect of the interior upon the visitor on entering is decidedly pleasing. One of the chief features, it will at once be noticed, is the fact that the aisles, throughout its entire length, have chapels adjoining them. The Renaissance screen, which divides the nave from the choir,

though somewhat over-elaborate in character, is a very fine example of the kind of work that it represents.

The church might well be known as the Westminster Abbey of Antwerp, for in it many of the wealthiest and most distinguished families of the city have for centuries had their burial-vaults, the most interesting of which is that of the Rubens family in the ambulatory. Indeed, after the Cathedral, St. Jacques may, from the richness of its monuments and decorations (concerning the character of which, however, some critics have been extremely severe), well lay claim to be the most important church. There is good stained glass, most of it dating from the seventeenth century, in several of the chapels, particularly the second in the north aisle, which also contains a fine triptych by Abraham Janssens, "The Coronation of Our Lady," with good portraits of the donors. The end chapel behind the high altar is the burial-place of the Rubens family; and the altar-piece represents the Madonna and Child adored by St. Bonaventura, close to whom stands the Magdalen. The effect of the great central picture with its group of women, to our mind, is in a measure spoiled by the introduction of the two male figures, who have really no *raison d'être* in the position they occupy. The colouring is good, and, though the picture has been greatly injured, it exhibits enough of Rubens' greater characteristics to render it a valuable legacy of his genius. The picture for many will have added interest from the fact that the face of St. George is generally supposed to have been painted by Rubens from his own countenance, whilst his two wives appear in the figures of Mary Magdalene and Martha, and his father is reproduced as St. Jerome, his son as one of the hovering cherubs, and his aged grandfather as the figure of Time.

Rubens, who died on May 30, 1640, aged sixty-four, we are told, was borne to his tomb in St. Jacques (which was covered by a slab in 1755), with the greatest honours that it was possible for the city to pay.

The choir stalls form another feature of the church, which should be noted. They were carved by the older and younger Quellin, and they still bear the arms of the noble families to which they once belonged. Rubens' stall is the twelfth to the left from the entrance.

The confessionals of St. Jacques in the ambulatory, south



side along the walls of the choir, are famous almost the world over. They are the work of Artus Quellin, Louis Willemsens, his pupil, and other noted wood-carvers of the period.

The second church we have mentioned, that of St. Paul though standing in a picturesque part of the town near the *Marché au Bétail*, is in a most unsalubrious neighbourhood, and had, indeed, better be avoided, especially in the summer-time, by persons subject to complaints arising from bad smells. It is best reached by way of the quays, proceeding from the Cathedral through the *Marché aux Gants*, and along the *Canal du Sucre*, past the *Maison Hanseat*, past the *Musée du Stein*, and then into the *Marché au Bétail*. St. Paul's, which formerly belonged to the adjoining Dominican monastery, is in the Late Gothic Style, and was erected during the period covered by the years 1533-1571. The relief over the outer doorway of the court depicts St. Dominic receiving the rosary from Our Lady, and to the right as one enters the church is an astoundingly gaudy Calvary, constructed of rock and rubble, erected against the wall of the transept. Above it is the Crucifixion, below the entombment and Holy Sepulchre, whilst all around are other scenes—St. Peter with the crowing cock, Christ and the Magdalene in the Garden, with a number of statues of saints, angels, prophets, and others. On entering the church one is at once struck by its elegant and beautiful proportions, and it should be visited by students of architecture and others, as presenting one of the best examples of the more refined type of church raised in Belgium by the Dominican Order. Its magnificent Renaissance choir stalls and carved confessionals are celebrated throughout the country. The nave is very spacious, with a deep, aisleless choir terminating in an apse and having transepts. A very fine painting of this church by the artist David Roberts is now hung in the Tate Gallery, London. The Renaissance tower, which terminates in a cupola, is built against the eastern side of the southern transept, and as the transepts do not project beyond the nave, they appear from the outside of the church to be unusually short when considered in proportion to their height.

There are several pictures of note in this church, among them "The Bearer of the Cross," an early work of Van

Dyck; a "Crucifixion," by Jacob Jordaens; and an "Adoration of the Shepherds and Presentation in the Temple," by Maerten de Vos. In the north transept is Rubens' "Scourging of Christ," and at the altar is a "Virgin of the Rosary," the original of which, by Caravaggio, was sent as a present to the Emperor Joseph of Austria, who forwarded this copy in exchange.

The high altar in the choir, the work of Pieter Verbruggen, has an altar-piece by Cornelius Cels, the "Descent of the Cross," and in the south aisle on the altar to the left is Rubens' "Assemblage of Church Teachers," and a *pietà* of De Crayer on the altar to the right. "The Seven Works of Mercy," a curious collection of cripples and the halt of every description by the elder Teniers, is to be seen opposite.

Of the other things worth seeing in this interesting church, may be mentioned the ornate Renaissance confessional-stalls lining the side of the nave aisles. On each side of the seats of these works is a place for the communicant, and the front is decorated by two statues of angels standing on either side in simple attitudes, near which are almost life-size figures of saints. The carving, though comparatively modern, is very fine, and particularly should be noticed the disposition and the execution of the draperies, which are free and very graceful in style. The expressions and attitudes of the figures, we noticed, were particularly pleasing from their repose and absence of anything theatrical.

Antwerp, of course, is celebrated because of its picture-gallery, which is so splendidly housed in the fine museum at the southern end of the town. We reached it from St. Paul's by way of the wide quays, always interesting, and instinct with maritime and commercial life. It is obviously impossible to more than indicate a few of the treasures contained in this imposing building, which stands, delightfully surrounded by trees, on the Place Leopold Wael. It is erected in the Greek Renaissance Style, with a touch of the Baroque, from plans by J. J. Winders and François Van Dyck in 1879-1890. The Museum forms a massive rectangle enclosing six fine inner courts. The attic story is imposing, and embellished with allegorical figures and medallions of Ducaju, De Pleyn, and Fabri. The horizontal line of the upper cornice is broken at the corners by massive pylon-

shaped pedestals, on which are placed four horse chariots and figures by Vinçotte.

At the rear of the building is a magnificent and colossal group by L. Mignon, intended as commemorative of the artist, Sir Antony Van Dyck.

In the sculpture gallery, in the left wing of the ground floor, are to be seen some magnificent examples of modern art; and in the right wing on the same floor are the Rubens and Vandyck collections, which are world-famed and priceless.

The upper part of the building is devoted to the picture-gallery. It may be mentioned that this magnificent museum contains in its almost unequalled rooms a large number of Flemish pictures, which were, many of them, collected from the churches and monasteries of the city and elsewhere at the time of their suppression, and, when viewing them, it should be borne in mind that a large number of the canvases here seen were painted for ecclesiastical use and positions in churches, and not for exhibition in a museum.

Students generally need no urging to give this marvellous collection of pictures several days' attentive study.

Of course, the great glory of the museum is its Rubens collection, and it may not be out of place here to indicate very briefly the position of this great artist as a master in Flemish art. In the early days of painting in the Low Countries, the art may be said to have followed a strictly national line of development, very little impinged upon by outside methods or the work of foreign schools. By the time of Quentin Matsys, Pourbus, and others, the effect of the Italian Renaissance had begun to be felt by the artists of the Low Countries, but it was not until the advent of Rubens that Flemish painting became materially altered in style and sentiment, and in a measure adopted the broader and more grandiose style of the then Italian, and especially the Venetian, masters; but it must be frankly admitted that, whilst Rubens was undoubtedly indebted to these for much of his knowledge and not a little of his style, he yet managed to infuse his pictures with local feeling, and to leave upon them the mark of his own somewhat flamboyant taste.

Rubens, although born at Siegen, in Nassau, in 1577, was the son of an Antwerp judge, belonging to an important family who had been exiled because of their supposed



Calvinistic faith, and disgraced on account of the intrigue of a member of the family with Anne of Saxony, the eccentric wife of William of Orange. Thus it will be seen that Rubens was a gentleman both by birth and breeding, and his pictures may be said in a way to indicate these characteristics on account of their luxuriant and brilliant colouring and general taste. He learned painting of Otho van Veem, who was the Court painter to the Duke of Parma, and himself a Flemish artist, though he had become a naturalized Italian. Rubens apparently travelled quite early in life fairly widely in Italy, where he gained, to a great extent, a taste for the prevailing characteristics of Italian art as seen in the works of Paul Veronese, Titian, and, to a considerably less extent, in those of Tintoretto. To these influences, and to those of Domenichino and the later Roman school of painters, one must add the more subtle one, under which doubtless Rubens was brought, of the spirit of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century art.

The voyages to America and India, and the sudden opening up of vast possibilities in overseas trade and discovery, had its effect upon even such an uncommercial thing as the art of painting, and it may be said that there was a Renaissance, not only of commerce, but of general activity, during this period which affected all walks in life. The effect of this romantic age was seen in our own country chiefly in its literature, the rich and varied harvests of Elizabethan wits, poets, and philosophers. In the Netherlands the effect was seen not in literature, but in art, and during that period were produced many of the wonderful works in the school of Rubens which form some of the chief art treasures of Belgium of to-day.

It must not be forgotten, too, that environment can often play an important part in the element of action as well as in the subjects of pictures. A fair acquaintance with Rubens' works must always, we think, bring home to the student that element of bustle and vigorous life which was the reflex, as it were, of the hustling, busy life of a great port such as Antwerp had become in Rubens' time.

Rubens was one of the most prolific of masters, and may be said to have been a genius at "lightning" studies, although many of the pictures which occupied him scarcely as many days as they might have been supposed to have

taken weeks, show very little trace of the prodigious rapidity with which he worked. Not a few of his largest canvases were done in a fortnight, but it should be remembered, in connection with both the number of pictures he painted and the speed at which they were turned out, that he frequently called in to his assistance, in the painting of less important details, one or other of the many pupils he always seems to have had available. Of all Rubens' pupils Van Dyck was destined to become the most famous, and had far the most individuality, tenderness, and refinement. His works, a number of which are to be seen in the Museum, are indeed more satisfying and more artistic than many of those of his master himself.

In the Hall of the Ancient Masters of the Antwerp Museum, containing examples both of native and foreign art, are many pictures well worth the study, not only of students, but of all in the last interested in the evolution of an art.

To give more than a mere catalogue of the most important pictures would be impossible in a book of the present size and scope and this could have no possible interest. It must therefore suffice for us to mention Rubens, Van Dyck, Quentin Matsys, David Teniers, Michael Coxie, Van Orley, Martin de Vos, Gerard Terburg, Franz Hals, Franz de Vriendt, Titian, M. Hobbema, Jacques Jordaens, Hans Memlinc, Jan Gossaert, and Hans Holbein.

Most notable painters of the nineteenth century are also represented by more or less famous works, and many of these are well worth examination, not only from the point of view of gaining thereby an acquaintance with what is best in modern Belgian art, but because of the historic and pictorial interest of many of the subjects dealt with.

One leaves this great collection each time with a greater appreciation for the masters of the past, who, often labouring under mechanical difficulties, yet so frequently triumphed over them and left such a precious heritage for their successors.

The centre of Antwerp anciently was the Grande Place, and it is in the immediate neighbourhood of it, and the Cathedral that one naturally wanders amid narrow, winding, and often far from cleanly streets in search of what now remains of the once numerous houses of merchant princes of the past. Most of the old Guild Houses, including the

*Maison de Tonneliers* (House of the Coopers), *Maison de la Vielle Arbalète* (House of the Archers) with a double-storied gable and a gilded figure of St. George on horseback; and *Maison des Charpentiers* (House of the Carpenters) are on the Grande Place.

The Hôtel de Ville of Renaissance design will be a great disappointment to most people who have seen those of Yprès, Louvain, Bruges, Brussels, and even some in towns of lesser note. It appears to us quite unworthy of the great city by the Scheldt. It was in most part built in 1560 or thereabouts from designs by Cornelis de Vriendt or Floris, but was greatly injured by a fire during the attack upon Antwerp by the Spaniards twenty years later. The façade is rather imposing as regards size, but plain and almost domestic in character. The ground floor is of red marble, and the two upper stories have arcades with Doric and Ionic pillars of substantial character. The top floor has an open loggia or colonnade supporting the roof. One of the most interesting details of an unusually uninteresting building is the statue of the Virgin and Child, which was placed in the niche in the gable end by the Spaniards in 1585. The Virgin is the patroness of the city, and on either side of her are statues symbolical of Justice and Wisdom.

The interior has been greatly modernized, but the staircase of coloured marbles, and the huge wooden Carytides supporting the roof and representing different industries of the city, are effective. The wall decorative paintings, by A. de Vriendt, the possessor of a great name in Flemish art, and by no means a poor craftsman himself, though modern, and dating only from 1898, are interesting and excellent works of their kind. They depict scenes in the history of the city at its zenith of power and prosperity.

Most of the rooms are adorned by carved wooden panel-work, and in the Burgomaster's room there is a finely carved chimneypiece in the Renaissance style, taken from the Premonstratensian Abbey of Tongerlo. The gem of the rooms, however, is the Great Hall, of late years known as the *Salle Leys*, by reason of the fine paintings by Baron Hendrik Leys, who was a pupil of F. de Braekelder and Gustav Wappers, which decorate the walls. The subjects, which are historical, and are boldly and spiritedly painted, depict the entry of Charles V. into Antwerp in 1514, when



he swore to respect the ancient privileges of the citizens; the scene of the Burgomaster, Van Ursele, entrusting the magistrate, Van Spanghen, with the command of the Municipal Guard for the defence of the city in 1541; the Rights of Citizenship (Freedom of the City) being conferred upon one Pallavicini of Genoa in 1541; and Margaret of Parma giving the keys of the city to the Burgomaster during the troubles of 1566. In the *Salle de Mariages* (where the civil marriages take place) there are some good pictures by a pupil of Leys dealing with ancient marriage customs, and a fine black and white marble Renaissance chimneypiece.

Amongst the many other interesting buildings in Antwerp one must give pride of place to the *Musée Plantin-Moretus*, which stands in a corner of the little *Marché du Vendredi*, reached pleasantly along the Quais Van Dyck and Plantin by the waterside, and *promenoirs*. The museum derives its name from the famous printer, Christopher Plantin, and his son-in-law, John Moretus. The house, in which seven generations of the family of Moretus had carried on their business of printers, was acquired by the city of Antwerp in 1875.

The building is one of the most interesting in Belgium, as it remains essentially just as it was when occupied by the famous printer in the sixteenth century, an admirable and unique example of the dwelling-house and business offices of a wealthy and refined Flemish citizen-merchant of that period.

In it are a number—fifteen in all—of early works by Rubens, and other interesting portraits and pictures by other Antwerp and Flemish painters. Fine tapestry, spinet, furniture, manuscripts from ninth to sixteenth century, letters and documents relating to the families of Plantin and Moretus, and specimens of the famous Plantin Press books. These latter include the celebrated “*Biblia Polyglotta*,” published from 1568 to 1573.

The printing office, which is across a beautiful courtyard, with its wonderful old vine rambling over the hoary walls, reminding one of those of our own Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, is of great interest by reason of the fact that the various rooms remain in their original state, as though the workmen had but just left them for the luncheon hour, after putting down the work upon which they had

been engaged, to return very shortly and resume their labours. The ancient proof-sheets are still lying about in the chamber allotted to proof-readers; and in the type-room it is the same: the old matrices, formes, rules, and chases are still as they were left; and in the composing and printing rooms are two sixteenth-century presses. The proprietor's room, and the chamber which it is traditionally believed the famous Professor Justus Lipsius, of Louvain University, used to occupy when on business visits to his publisher, Moretus, are equally interesting as giving one a clear and fascinating glimpse of a bygone age and a knowledge of ancient things. The missals and medieval manuscripts are worthy of the closest inspection and study, and the beautiful cabinets of mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell are not likely to escape the notice of the admirers and collectors of old furniture.\*

Although the immediate environs of Antwerp are not, like those of Brussels, very picturesque, the famous avenues in the city and suburbs, mostly constructed on the sites formerly occupied by the ancient ramparts, are extensive, and a walk or drive along them gives one an excellent impression of the better portion of the city. Considering its size and commercial character, Antwerp is fairly well provided with open spaces. The most picturesque of its parks and public gardens is that lying within the triangle of the three avenues named after Rubens, Van Dyck, and Quentin Matsys, almost in the exact geographical centre of the city. Its pretty trees, and two sheets of ornamental water, make it a favourite resort with Antwerp folk in the evenings, and especially during the time the band plays on Sundays.

A short way to the south-west is the *Palais de Justice*, a modern building dating from 1871, in the French style, and designed on the lines of a château of the seventeenth century. The pretty little *Jardin Botanique* is close by, the museum of which is worth seeing; and north-eastward from the park lies that fashionable resort the Zoological Garden, at the back of the *Gare Centrale*. It is one of the best in Europe, and there are excellent and almost daily concerts held in it.

\* Those who would know more of this fascinating old house, its history and historic contents, cannot do better than possess themselves of a copy of Max Roose's excellent and instructive volume, "*Le Musée Plantin-Moretus*."

The restaurant in summer presents one of the most lively and attractive sights, crowded as it usually is by Belgian families of the better class bent upon enjoying themselves.

Here is the place for the student to study the different types of the better class Antwerpers, and an hour or two spent in this way is not wasted.

A few words in conclusion of this brief account of Antwerp must be said regarding one of the most beautiful features of the city. We refer to the gorgeous and wonderful sunsets which are so often seen across the Scheldt. Over the immense *Fort de la Tête de Flandre*, whose grimness is in such contrast to the gaiety, roundabouts, swing-boats, skittle-alleys, and general air of amusement in the grounds of the Kursaal, which clings almost to its skirts, on cloudy summer evenings there is a scene of aerial beauty scarcely equalled in another part of northern Europe. On a "sunset" evening (as favourable atmospheric conditions are called) crowds throng the elevated *promenoirs* by the riverside, all intent upon the wonderful sky effects that the sun, wind, and atmosphere are, as it were, unrolling before them like some huge cloud and seascape canvas of a great master.

It is a sight not to be easily forgotten, for it often has a savage splendour and riotous magnificence of colouring.



## CHAPTER X

### GHENT: ITS STORY AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS

G HENT, which from time immemorial has been the capital of East Flanders, and in the Middle Ages was so keen a commercial rival of Bruges, is situate at the junction of the Scheldt with the Lys, where there arose in the very earliest period of the Middle Ages a rapidly growing trading town, known as Gent in Flemish, Gande in French, but which is nowadays more commonly written Ghent. Like Bruges, too, it spread over a close network of rivers and canals, derived chiefly from the two main streams, and those of the Lieve and the Moere.

Perhaps Ghent, even more than Bruges, from a purely physical aspect deserves the term of "The Venice of the North," for the intersecting streams and canals have actually split it up into a considerable number of islands. Quite early in its history it had a splendid system of communication by water with Bruges, Courtrai, Tournai, and other towns, and less directly with both Antwerp and Brussels.

Nowadays Ghent is also in direct communication with the North Sea through the Terneuzen Canal, which is of a sufficient depth to allow of the passage of ships of considerable size.

The chief industry of the city from its early days was weaving, and this grew so rapidly during the Middle Ages that in time, although the citizens had received from their Count one of the usual charters such as were granted by the feudal lords of cities, its subjection to the latter became almost purely nominal, and whilst owing allegiance to both the Counts of Flanders and the Dukes of Burgundy, the citizens enjoyed such privileges and immunities as rendered them *de facto* almost independent.

Ghent in these far-off days equipped large bodies of citizen soldiers, and at the height of its prosperity and wealth could put 80,000 men in the field.

The men of Ghent were, one would gather, always great fighters. And although in the early days of the rebellion of De Coninck and Breidel of Bruges they blew hot and cold, they became eventually determined opponents of the claims put forward by the Kings of France to interfere in the internal affairs of the country, and had a great deal to do with the winning of the famous Battle of Spurs.

Quite early in the fourteenth century the burghers of Ghent struck a blow for, and practically attained, independence under the leadership of the famous brewer, Jacob, or Jacques, Van Artevelde. Till the beginning of the fourteenth century the Counts and the people of Flanders had been united in their determination to resist the claims of the French kings to in any way rule over them. But the complexion of affairs was altered in 1322 by the accession of Count Louis of Nevers, who, by reason of his French education and interests and his aristocratic leanings, was out of sympathy with the popular cause. He not only favoured French pretensions, but was actuated in a measure so to do by the personal desire he had to curtail the democratic liberties of his Flemish towns, and to play the rôle of a despotic ruler. As might be expected, the wealthy and largely populated towns, at the head of which stood Ghent, determined upon resistance, and in the year 1337 Van Artevelde was appointed to enforce their wishes, and, fearing the storm that he had raised, Count Louis fled to France and appealed for aid to the then reigning King, Philippe of Valois.

It was thus that Edward III. of England, who was then engaged in a war with France, came to put forward at the instance of Van Artevelde, who sought alliance with the English King, a claim to the French crown. Van Artevelde was largely influenced in his scheme of getting Edward III. to formulate this claim, by reason of the fact that the Flemings were diffident of entirely throwing off their allegiance. Van Artevelde was clever enough to see that if his fellow-countrymen could be persuaded that Edward had a claim to the French throne, he would find an alliance with Edward to gain the independence of East Flanders a much

more popular thing. Edward, therefore, came forward as the King of France in seeking an alliance with Flanders. The commercial results of this friendship were destined to be of much greater importance than the political. England was the great producer of the raw material, wool, which the town of Ghent needed for its industrial activity, and the alliance proved of immense value to both parties.

It was under these circumstances that Van Artevelde, captain of Ghent, rose to a position of immense power, and for nearly a decade held not only the supreme authority in his native town, but over the greater part of Flanders as well. So powerful, indeed, did Van Artevelde become that Edward III., who stayed at Ghent as his guest on several occasions, treated him on equal terms, and Edward's Queen, Philippa of Hainault, stood as godmother to Van Artevelde's infant son, Philip. Van Artevelde, in the course and development of his alliance with Edward, at last found himself in opposition to a considerable number of his fellow citizens on making to them the suggestion that Edward's son, the Black Prince, should be elected Count of Flanders. The proposition was opposed to the medieval spirit of attachment to a reigning house, and riots in the town took place, during which Van Artevelde was assassinated by one Gerard Denys. The effect of this assassination was to give an impetus to, and confirm, the policy of alliance with England, which the victim of Gerard Denys had brought about.

This alliance was destined to have far-reaching results. Edward introduced the woollen industry into the Eastern counties of England, and the city, which had sought a close alliance with him, rose speedily to a position of being the chief manufacturing town in Europe.

By 1381 Philip Van Artevelde had risen to such position that he was appointed dictator by the Democratic party; and he gained greatly in power during the war he waged against the son of Count Louis, whose forces he defeated with great slaughter in a battle outside Bruges. After this Philip felt himself strong enough to grasp the position of Regent of Flanders. He was, however, not destined to hold this position long, as Count Louis, the son of Jacques Van Artevelde's old enemy, succeeded in obtaining a substantial aid from Charles VI. of France, and brought about the defeat of Philip Van Artevelde at the Battle of Roosebeke, in



1382. In this battle Philip was slain, and with his death may be said to have ended the local freedom of the cities in Flanders. It is quite true that for a long period the cities every now and again revolted against their sovereign, but they were obliged for the most part to submit to the rule of their Counts and the Burgundian princes, who ultimately inherited these dominions by marriage with the House of the Count of Flanders.

From that period onwards the city became the capital of the Burgundian Dukes, and its history became intermingled with that of the House of Austria.

Like its neighbour Bruges, Ghent suffered from the gradual silting up of its ancient waterways, and by the commencement of the nineteenth century practically all of them, except the Scheldt, had become impassable, necessitating the construction in 1827 of the great ship canal to Terneuzen, which nowadays will admit large vessels approaching two thousand tons burthen. This canal has served to some extent to preserve Ghent from the state of decay and commercial isolation which overtook Bruges. Unfortunately for Ghent, the outlet of this great canal lies in Dutch territory, and on account of the heavy tolls which are levied the waterway—which might be the cause of so much additional commercial prosperity—is very much less used than it otherwise would be. But after all, the city, which owes most of its present-day prosperity to its industrial life and the manufacture of cotton, linen, machinery and leather, derives most of its importance from its central position on the Belgian railway system.

Ghent has undergone far more modernization than has Bruges. But as one strolls through its streets one encounters even nowadays many interesting relics of its past, and many quaint corners rich in medieval buildings or with fragments of bygone architecture. The oldest part of the town is that lying on the island formed by the junction of the Lys and the Scheldt with their various backwaters. It was near this point, but somewhat beyond the Lys, that the Counts of Flanders first erected a strong château or castle known as the Gravenstein or Oudenberg, which was built about 868 by Baoudorain, or Baldwin of the Iron Arm, as a defence against Norman invaders. It was around this spot, rendered particularly suitable by reason of the presence

of two navigable rivers, that the early merchants and weavers gradually settled.

One of the most important and prominent buildings in Ghent, from the sight of which we have found it almost impossible to escape, is the fine Early Gothic belfry, which, though designed nearly a century earlier than that of Bruges (about 1183), was not erected until 1321-1339. The windows have been walled up, and unfortunately the tapering turret crowning the tower is modern and of iron. The huge gilded dragon which surmounts it is, by tradition, stated to have been brought back to Bruges from the Mosque of St. Sophia at Constantinople, by the Crusader Baldwin of Flanders, about the beginning of the thirteenth century. It is said to have been removed from its original home as a trophy by the burghers of Ghent, under the command of Philip Van Artevelde, after his defeat of Count Louis near the Minnewater at Bruges in 1382. Much dispute has raged round the question of the origin of the famous gilded dragon, which certainly strikes one as being of an Oriental type, but is claimed, owing to discoveries made by M. Vuylsteke, to have been made in Ghent, in 1380, although possibly based upon some Eastern model.

From the summit of the belfry, which is about 385 feet in height, a very extensive and beautiful prospect unfolds itself, with the principal buildings and picturesque tree-bordered canals just below one, and beyond the city the level plain of Flanders spread out like a green-patterned carpet. On a clear day one can see beyond Bruges to Oudenarde on the one hand, and even discern Antwerp on the other. The chimes are almost as noted as those of Bruges, and are in our mind more musical. The belfry contains the famous bell known as Roelandt, or Roland, upon which appears in Flemish the inscription: "Myn naem isk Roelandt; als ick cleppe dan is't brand. Als ic luyde, is't victorie in Vlaenderland." Which, roughly translated, means: "My name is Roland; when I toll there is fire. When I ring there is victory in Flanders." The bell which now hangs in the belfry is not the ancient one cast in 1314. That was lowered and broken up by Charles V. in February, 1540, "to shatter the pride of the Gantois."

At the foot of the belfry stands a small but ancient Cloth Hall, dating from 1424, a graceful Gothic edifice of the



Decorated Period. It has recently been restored not too wisely, and with somewhat too great completeness.

To reach the Hôtel de Ville one passes through the *Marché du Beurre*, or Butter Market. There is a doorway on the right near by the belfry, formerly the entrance to the town prison, which has recently been restored. In the gable of the latter is a famous eighteenth-century relief, known as the "Mammelocker," which was doubtless intended to inspire a feeling of charity in the passers-by for the poor prisoners. The panel is coarse in subject and in treatment, and certainly serves no decorative nor artistic purpose.

The Hôtel de Ville, which is amongst one of the most picturesque specimens of Gothic architecture in East Flanders, is divided into two portions. That in the Early Renaissance Style, which dates from about 1595-1628, is not only one of the earliest, but is also in many respects the best, example of this type of architecture in Belgium, chiefly because it retains certain interesting features of the local domestic building, such as the pointed gable ends and the projecting windows, with dormers, which are to be found on the main front. In its three stories, with their projecting half-colonnades, one sees three distinct types of columns—Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian—on the ground floor and first and second floors respectively. The other portion of the Hôtel de Ville, erected from about 1518-1535, from designs by Dominic de Waghemakere, has a very interesting and handsome balcony. The Gothic work, as a whole, is of the most florid character. The most likely expert criticism to be passed upon it is that it lacks dignity and grace, but is very attractive—at least, to the less educated eye—in its splendour of detail. The niches which have been filled contain quite modern statues of saints, of no particular merit.

Noticeable features of this portion of the Hôtel de Ville, which forms so fine an example of florid Gothic architecture, are the beautiful entrance staircase and the main portal over it, with the exquisite little balcony, from which, in olden times, the orders of the Counts and other similar proclamations were read to the citizens summoned for this purpose by Roland in the belfry hard by.

The large projecting window belonging to the chapel, near the centre of the façade, is also well worth careful scrutiny.



In the interior of the Hôtel de Ville is a handsome Gothic staircase, which has seen many vicissitudes, having been taken out of the original building, erected in a private house, and then brought back and re-erected in its present position in the Hôtel de Ville. There are also some interesting rooms and courts, which will repay the student who may have time to visit them.

Quite close to the Hôtel de Ville are several excellent and well-preserved examples of Early Domestic architecture, amongst them that known as the *Cour St. George*, facing the Hôtel de Ville, a Gothic structure belonging to one of the ancient guilds of the city.

On the left-hand side of the Place at the corner, as one faces the Hôtel de Ville, at the corner of the Rue Catalogne, stands the Church of St. Nicholas, the oldest in Ghent. It was founded in the eleventh century, but it would appear to have been rebuilt in Early Gothic Style about the years 1390 to 1420. Its most distinguishing feature is its very fine Decorated tower, which happily escaped serious damage during the time of the religious wars, and the wild excesses of the iconoclasts, and the depredations and destruction of the French Revolutionary Army during its occupation of Belgium. It has also not been restored, usually a circumstance for congratulation, unless such restoration is undertaken in the most sympathetic spirit, and is carried out by the most competent hands. The main front of the church faces the *Koorn Markt*, and over the door is to be seen a modern figure of the patron saint engaged in raising the three boys whose fate it was to have been salted down as meat. St. Nicholas was the patron saint of commerce, and was therefore, in the days of Belgium's medieval prosperity, very popular.

The interior of the building has been of recent years modernized, and is not particularly pleasing, and the carved pulpit is unusually ugly. The vaulting of the nave, aisles, and choir is covered with plaster, and the second-rate and gaudy decorations of the church do much to spoil what is in reality a fine interior. There are one or two pictures worthy of examination, "The Madonna and Child, with St. John," by Maes Canini, in the second chapel on the right, meriting special notice.

On the fourth pillar of the north aisle in the nave is a



THE PROMENADE AND ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL QUAIS, GHENT





record of the burial had by of one Oliver Minsau and his wife, whose claim to immortality seems to be the fact that they had together one-and-thirty children. It was Oliver Minsau, accompanied by his twenty-one sons, who attracted the attention of the Emperor Charles V. on his entry into Ghent in the year 1526. Unhappily, very shortly afterwards the whole of this large family was carried off by plague.

The picture of the altar-piece, which is by Liemakere, is "The Election of St. Nicholas as Bishop of Myra." It is not a particularly good composition, giving an impression of confusion to the beholder.

The handsome Church of St. Michael, commenced in 1445, its Late Gothic windows closely resembling English Perpendicular work, with its unfinished tower, lies just across the Lys westward from St. Nicholas. This church, which was not completed till 1673, has its south side hidden by a former Dominican convent. Unfortunately, the fine west portal has been terribly mutilated, and the numerous statues which once adorned it removed. The interior has been of recent years greatly renovated.

The choir is extremely handsome, and the impression created on the observer by the red brick walls, in contrast with the white window-frames and pillars, is very pleasing. In the north transept is Van Dyck's celebrated "Crucifixion," which was painted in 1630 for the Confraternity of the Holy Cross in Ghent. It was undoubtedly once a fine picture, but has been greatly spoiled by successive restorations.

Amongst the other pictures worth noting in this church, including some good works belonging to the Rubens school, are a Segher's "The Scourging of Christ," and a De Crayer, "The Descent of the Holy Ghost," and one of the best of the latter artist's works, "The Assumption of St. Catherine." This church, it is interesting to remember, was one of those turned into a Temple of Reason at the time of the French Revolution, and during the occupation by the Revolutionary forces.

The Cathedral Church of Ghent, dedicated to St. Bavon, stands at the south-east corner of the square of the same name. It is a massive, but rather plain, building, which was ultimately, and until 1540, dedicated to St. John. In 1559 the building became the Cathedral Church of Ghent.

St. Bavon would appear, from all that is known concerning

him, which is not much, to have been of somewhat dubious holiness. He is legendarily described as a Duke of Brabant in the first age of Christianity in Flanders. From some accounts he is stated to have been a nobleman of Hesbain, Liège, who passed the greater part of his early life as a soldier of fortune, and in what are euphemistically described as "worldly pleasures." However, at the age of about fifty, on the death of his wife, he became so overwhelmed with grief that he gave up all his possessions to the poor, and, after hearing a sermon by St. Amand, entered a monastery at Ghent, of which the latter was the founder. Of this institution the erstwhile soldier of fortune eventually became Abbot, but, finding the monastic life of the time not sufficiently rigorous to salve his conscience from the worldly pleasures and sins in which he had indulged, St. Bavon fled from his brethren and became a hermit, living in a hollow tree in the forest which in those days covered a portion of the land outside Ghent. The emblem which is associated with him is a falcon.

To the ecclesiastics and burghers of Ghent about 1540 it seemed fitting that the then parish church of St. John should be re-dedicated to the local saint, whose relics were deposited in it on the destruction of the ancient Abbey of St. Bavon by Charles V.

The great portal of the west front of the Cathedral was greatly defaced during the French Revolution, and its statues thrown down from the niches which they occupied. Three of them have been replaced. The central figure of these represents our Saviour, on the left hand of whom is St. Bavon, with his falcon and sword and book, emblematical of his legendary dual nature of duke and monk. He is clad in armour and wears a ducal robe. On the right of the central figure is one of St. John the Baptist, the first patron saint of the church.

One feature characteristic of Continental Gothic architecture may be noticed from the south side, where one finds in the externals of the nave, aisles, and choir the rounded or apsidal terminations in place of the square end which usually goes with English Gothic architecture.

The interior is somewhat disappointing as a whole, although the single aisles and short transepts in the Early

Gothic Style give to it a certain dignity. Its massive pillars and the height of its arches certainly give to it nobleness and a sense of spaciousness.

The church has many fine pictures, the chief of which, the polytych, "The Adoration of the Lamb," the work of Jan and Hubert Van Eyck, is not only one of their greatest masterpieces, but is by far the most important work of art possessed by Ghent. Unfortunately, it is seen at some considerable disadvantage in the church, and needs long and careful study before it can be thoroughly understood or appreciated. Besides being a wonderful example of the painter's art, and crowded with interesting figures, it has additional importance from the fact that it forms the crux, as it were, from which a new departure in Flemish art was initiated. The greater part of the work is by Hubert, who has been called the inventor of oil-painting, but who, of course, has no real claim to that title, although he was the first artist to employ that particular process in its more developed form. The picture is contained in the sixth chapel of the ambulatory, which belongs to the Vydt family. The work as it now stands is not entirely that of the two brothers Van Eyck. The original outer and upper shutters of the interior, painted by Hubert, and representing Adam and Eve, were removed, it is said, at the instance of the Emperor, Joseph II., owing to the fact that the figures of Adam and Eve on the shutters were nude, which fact, as a purist, he considered rendered them unsuitable for the decoration of an altar-piece. The lower wings, too, which, tradition states, were by Jan Van Eyck, have also been removed, and were purchased by the authorities in Berlin. In this case they have been replaced by very fair copies made in the early part of the sixteenth century by Michael Coxie, of Malines. The new Adam and Eve on the upper shutters are not copies of Hubert Van Eyck's work, but are different figures clad in skins. From many points of view other than that of sentiment, it is a great pity that the removed portions of the altar-piece cannot be reassembled. The painting was commissioned from Hubert Van Eyck by Josse Vydt, a wealthy inhabitant of the city, and his wife Isabella, somewhere about the year 1420. Hence its presence in this side chapel belonging to the family.

On the death of Hubert, which occurred in 1426, the great



work was still unfinished, and his brother completed it six years later.

A note should be made of the rhyming hexameter inscribed upon the picture, in which the poet, whoever he may have been (it is improbable that the versification is by the painter, Jan Van Eyck), is made to assert his belief that his brother was a greater painter than himself.

The subject of this wonderful picture as a whole is the "Adoration of the Lamb that was Slain," and seems to have been largely inspired and formulated by the passage from the Apocalypse which runs: "I looked, and behold a lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." And also: "I beheld, and lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, clothed with white robes and having palms in their hands. These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God; and He shall feed them and shall lead them to living fountains of water, and shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The chief figures and imagery of the central panel are the figure of the Lamb of God standing upon an altar hung with red damask and covered with a white cloth, whilst His blood is seen flowing into a crystal chalice. The Holy Ghost is seen descending upon Him in the form of a dove, and the Eternal Father appears in the central panel on top. Around the altar adoring angels with many-coloured wings are gathered, holding in their hands the instruments of the Passion, and in front of the altar two angels appear swinging censers. In the foreground is the Fountain of Life, from which pure water is flowing across the flower-bedecked fields of Paradise. Towards this centre four bands of worshippers are wending their way, emblematical of (a) the secular portion of the Christian Church; (b) the religious as opposed to the secular half of the Christian Church; (c) represents the Christian martyrs; and (d) the Virgin martyrs, many of whom carry their palms of martyrdom in their hands, the two latter groups illustrating the words of the *Te Deum*, "The glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, the Holy



THE ADORATION OF THE LAMB

HUBERT AND JAN VAN EYCK

*Cathedral of St. Baron, Ghent*





Church throughout all the world." In the more distant background are seen towered cities, possibly representing the artist's idea of the New Jerusalem, but, of course, Flemish, and not merely symbolical in character.

Before proceeding to a brief description of the remaining portions, it may be noted that of the whole only the four pictures forming the centre of the triptych are original, all the rest being copies. The left wings, the originals of which are generally ascribed to Jan Van Eyck, now in the museum at Berlin, form a continuation of the scene of the Prophets and of the secular side of Christendom, which is depicted in the central panel. They represent in the first half the various Orders of chivalry, and of the knight-hood of the Middle Ages riding, as though on a pilgrimage, towards the central figure of the Lamb. At their head may be distinguished the soldier-saints—St. George, St. Adrian, St. Maurice, and St. Charlemagne—and especially to be noted for their admirable grace and truth to life are the various actions of the horses ridden by these figures. The outer half of the picture represents a group of burgesses and merchants, among whom two figures in the foreground are traditionally supposed to be portraits of the artists—Hubert riding the white horse, with Jan behind clad in a dark-brown robe trimmed with fur. These groups may be said to complete the idea of the secular world assembled together in adoration of the Lamb of God. The right wings, which are also copies by Michael Coxie, the originals of which are also in the Old Museum at Berlin, depict the hermits and pilgrims. All who have time to study this portion of the picture carefully will be able to pick out for themselves the well and less known medieval characters and saints appearing in it. But what should be especially noticed is the exquisite detail which characterizes both the architecture and landscape, the clarity of the sky, and the beautiful foliage of the trees, which give an additional charm to these wonderfully interesting groups and portraits.

There are seven pictures in the upper tier, including the much-discussed figures of Adam and Eve. Of the remaining five the three central are by far the most important: for one reason, because it seems little to be doubted that they are the work of Hubert Van Eyck; and, for a second reason, that they carry on a representation, as it were, of the central

idea dominating the picture. The middle figure, dressed in white robes and wearing a white tiara or triple crown ornamented with a profusion of gems, is generally supposed to be the figure of Christ. But several authorities incline to the view that this in reality is a representation of God the Father. The figure is wonderfully imposing, and the folds of the beautiful mantle which is worn, loaded down with precious stones though it is, fall from the shoulders down to the feet in simple and graceful folds. The hands are particularly noticeable for their beautiful drawing, and the flesh colour, though bronzed in tone, is glowing and arresting. On the right hand of this central figure sits the Virgin, clad in her traditional robe of blue, and with her long fair hair bound round the forehead with a diadem. She is holding a book in her hand, and her expression is pensive, whilst her eyes gaze out calmly and untroubled upon the beholder. On the other side of the central figure is one of St. John the Baptist, long-haired and bearded, seated, and clad in long and flowing draperies. Next to him is a panel depicting Ste. Cecilia playing upon an organ, with a group of angels above her playing on other instruments. Beyond is the much-discussed panel depicting Eve, which took the place of the original already referred to, to which exception was taken.

This wonderful composition contains upwards of two hundred figures, quite a number of which, in addition to those we have pointed out, can be easily identified by an intelligent and careful student.

The wings, when shut, show panels (which are copies) painted in grisaille or in very low tones of colour, with the object of enhancing the jewel-like brilliance of the inner pictures. In the lower wings are representations of the Four Evangelists, set in niches as though in imitation of statuary; but these figures, it should be noted, were not so arranged in the originals. In the first or lowest tier of the upper wings the subject of the picture is the Annunciation. In the centre of this is an arcade, giving through it a glimpse of the city of Ghent as it was when the artist Hubert Van Eyck painted it; indeed, the vista is traditionally stated to have been that seen from the window of the artist's own studio, which formerly stood on the site of the present Café des Arcades in the Place d'Armes. To the right is the picture

of the Madonna reading, and, to the left, the angel Gabriel holding a lily in his hand. The dove is seen descending upon the Madonna's head. The painting is distinguished for a most curious blending of mysticism with the Flemish realism of the artist, who places the scene in his own city and with accessories of his own time.

In the uppermost tier of all are to be seen two figures of the Sibyls. The paintings on the outer shutters are almost entirely different from the originals now to be found in Berlin.

The history of this fine altar-piece, which has, as we have already indicated, been partially dismembered, is a romantic one. On completion it was placed in the family chapel of the donor, where it is now to be seen; but during the Reformation it was taken for security to the Hôtel de Ville. After the capitulation of the town to the Duke of Parma it was once more restored to its original position in the Cathedral. King Philippe II., indeed, wished to carry it off, but ultimately contented himself with a copy made by Michael Coxie, a portion of which copy has been used to build up the present triptych. The offending panels of Adam and Eve, removed in 1784, were hidden at first in the sacristy, but ten years later the remaining portions of the triptych were carried off to Paris during the war of the Revolution, and after the peace they were returned. But only the central portions were replaced in Vydt's chapel. The wings of the pictures, with the exception of those of Adam and Eve, were sold to a Brussels dealer named Solly, who eventually disposed of them to the then King of Prussia, who deposited them in the museum in Berlin. The original and hidden panels of Adam and Eve were then taken from their hiding-place, and the ecclesiastical authorities exchanged them with the Brussels Museum, which possessed the wings of Coxie's draped copies.

Such is the history of this famous work of the Van Eycks, which has been more romantic and fuller of vicissitudes than that of most works of art of the kind.\*

Among the remaining chapels which contain objects or pictures of interest may be mentioned the tenth, containing a fine altar-piece by Rubens, the subject of which is St.

\* For a more detailed description see "The Early Flemish Painters" of Crowe and Cavalcaselle.



Bavon renouncing his worldly possessions on embracing the monastic life. He is still seen, however, attired as a Duke of Brabant of the seventeenth century, and attended by pages. He makes his profession at the door of a handsome Renaissance church, and is evidently being received with acclamation by a body of richly robed ecclesiastics, amongst whom appears St. Amand. Rubens is said to have painted his own features as those of the patron saint, and it certainly must be admitted that they bear a considerable resemblance to his portrait of himself in the gallery at Florence. This self-portraiture in their religious works was a feature or a failing of most medieval artists of the Flemish school. On the left of the picture are two ladies in rather bizarre court dresses, who are said to be portraits of the painter's two wives, although this does not seem borne out by comparison with authenticated pictures of them. This altar-piece, though a specimen of Rubens' freest and perhaps most flamboyant manner, cannot be said to fulfil the requirements of a sacred picture in that it fails to impress the beholder with any sense of religious feeling.

The choir forms a very fine portion of this in many ways noble and well-proportioned building. The beautiful grey stone arches, dating from the fourteenth century, and the elegant triforium and fine brick vaulting, should all be noticed. The huge copper candlesticks which are in the choir, and bear the royal arms of England, belonged to Charles I., and came from his private oratory in old St. Paul's, London.\* They were sold by order of Oliver Cromwell, and eventually found their way to Ghent.

We have already indicated that the old city with its chief buildings, as well as the principal markets, was almost entirely placed upon the island which nowadays extends from the Palais de Justice on the south to the Botanical Gardens on the north, although it extended also to the smaller island on which stands the Church of St. Michael, and another on which stands the Château des Comtes. But by the end of the Middle Ages, we are able to see from ancient plans, and gather from contemporary descriptions, that the city had assumed almost its modern proportions, and in all probability had a population exceeding that of the present day. Nowadays, as is the case with Bruges, its old fortifications and

\* This is, however, disputed by some authorities.—C. H.

ramparts have been done away with, and their places taken by tree-shaded boulevards and canals.

Students in search of the ancient gate known as Le Rabot will have to traverse some of the most squalid streets of Ghent to find it. It is most easily reached from the Château des Comtes by way of the Rue des Bruges and the Rue du Rabot. It is quite worth seeing, although it now consists of little more than its two round towers and a high and picturesque gable end. On the outside of the gate is to be seen, in Old Flemish, an inscription recording the bravery of the Guilds which fought under Duke Philippe of Cleves in the year 1488, when the attack of the army of the Emperor Frederick III., made in the interests of his son Maximilian, was repulsed at this spot. It was in commemoration of this event that the fort and gateway were erected.

To those who wish to see the industrial and the underworld life of the city of Ghent no better introduction could be had than the walk from the Place Farralilde, through the squalid streets of the district in which Le Rabot stands. But it is not an excursion to be recommended to ladies, or to those for whom unpleasant smells have usually bad results.

Of the remaining objects of interest in Ghent itself, other than the Musée des Beaux Arts, a modern building opened in 1904, and containing some interesting pictures and groups of sculpture, may be mentioned the Palais de Justice, quite modern, and the Place d'Armes, or Couter, the ancient archery ground, now a pleasant and fashionable square, overshadowed by lime trees and on Friday and Sunday mornings a delightful and picturesque spot, by reason of its flower market. Hard by is the pleasant Café des Arcades which occupies the original site of Hubert Van Eyck's studio.

A more detailed notice, however, is demanded by the Château des Comtes picturesquely situate near the Place Farralilde, the Marché aux Poissons, and the ruined Abbey of St. Bavon in the south-eastern quarter of the town.

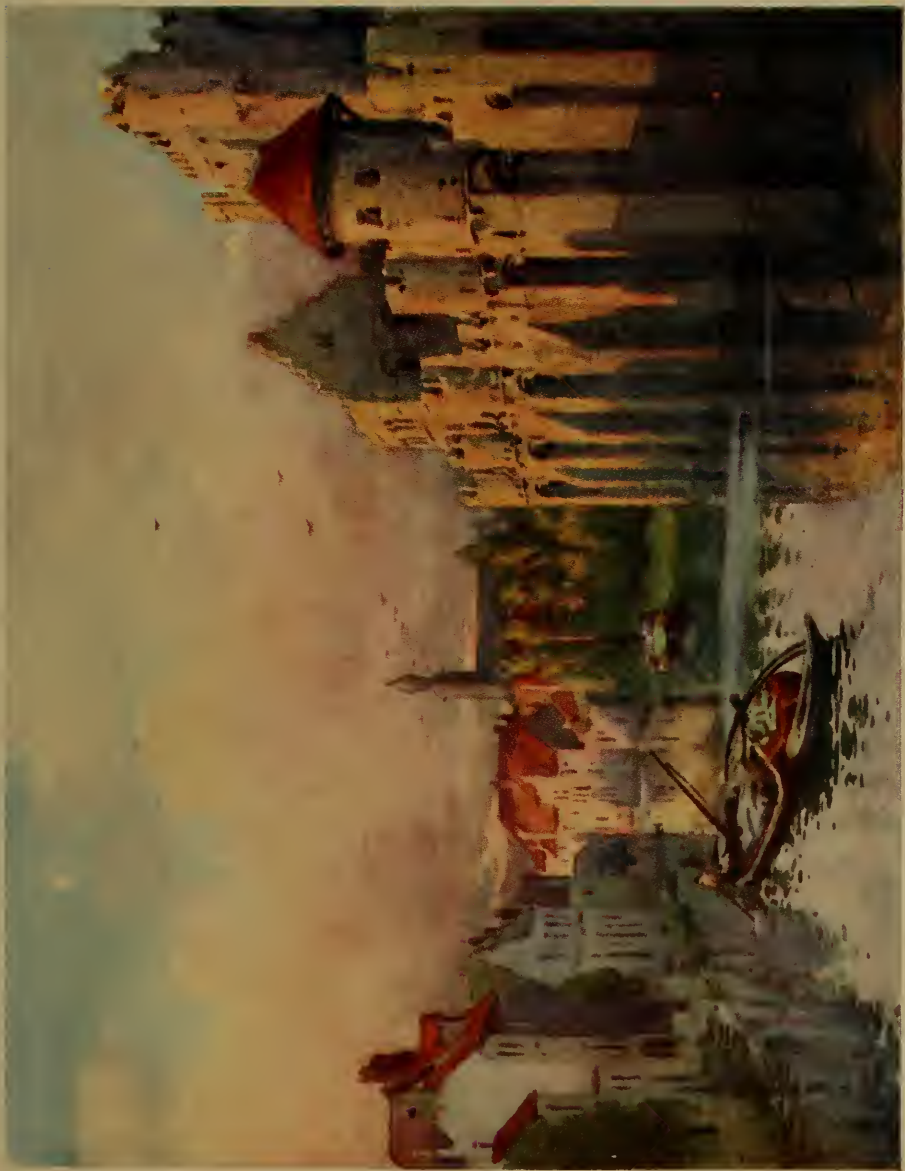
This Château des Comtes, which forms one of the most interesting and well-preserved medieval buildings in any city in Flanders, is said to have dated from the ninth century, and to have been rebuilt towards the end of the twelfth by Count Philip of Alsace when he returned from the Holy Land, and was thenceforth the chief residence of

the Counts of Flanders. Surrounded by water on three sides at the present day, this strong, ancient, and most interesting building, with its huge white walls and turrets and quaint roof, has only comparatively recently been restored to something approaching its former state. Here it was that Edward III. and his Queen, Philippa, were entertained by Jacques Van Artevelde, in 1399, in such a sumptuous manner that it is said their stay, of but comparatively few days, entailed an expense of something approaching a quarter of a million in present-day value of money.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, in the year 1407, the château became the seat of the Count of Flanders, appointed by Phillip le Bon of Burgundy. It long remained an important building, playing its part in the municipal life of the city and its vicissitudes down to the commencement of the nineteenth century, when it was strangely enough converted into a factory. In 1887, however, the municipal authorities of Ghent realized that one of its chief historical and architectural treasures was being degraded and injured by the use to which it was then put. In consequence of this it was acquired by the city, and was to a considerable extent isolated by the removal of immediately adjoining buildings, so that its beauty and importance could be realized; and under the direction of J. de Waele its interior, which had been seriously injured in the process of adapting it for commercial purposes, was carefully restored. The donjon or centre portion of the building contains a large banqueting hall, and above that another room of a similar character. The space above this and beneath the roof was used as a store for the stones and other medieval implements including catapults, etc., used for the defence. The château is entered through the Romanesque portal of the projecting gatehouse, from the platform of which one gains a most admirable and unique view of the surrounding building and streets. The outer wall possesses no less than twenty-seven semicircular towers dating from the last quarter of the twelfth century.

Several of the interior apartments still preserve many of their medieval features. One of the best examples is undoubtedly the underground room near the gatehouse, in which is a very interesting example of Romanesque vaulting.





CHÂTEAU DES COMTES, GHENT



The old fifteenth-century *consistorium*, now called the chapel, and the dungeon known as De Put, are perhaps the chief features of interest for the student, although, as a whole, the building is singularly complete, and forms a wonderfully preserved example of the semi-domestic architecture of those distant times.

In the south-eastern part of the town lies the ruins of the famous monastery of St. Bavon, well worthy of a visit from all who desire to make themselves acquainted with what is the oldest survival of the original city, or who wish to understand the development which took place during the Middle Ages onward. Ghent, as was the case with most other medieval towns, had beyond its outer walls quite a number of monastic institutions. And of all these, that of the Abbey of St. Bavon was the most famous. As one stands amidst the ruined cloisters of this once celebrated and beautiful abbey, it is not difficult to conjure up something of the institution which, from the ninth century onward to the time of its suppression, played so considerable a part, not alone in the life of the city, near the Antwerp gate of which it stood, but also in that of Flanders itself.

The Abbey of St. Bavon, the remains of which are singularly beautiful and impressive, had not a few famous men at various times as its heads, amongst them Eginnard, the son-in-law and biographer of the Emperor Charlemagne in the ninth century. It was in this abbey, by reason of the facts that the Counts of Flanders had a right of hospitality, Queen Philippa gave birth to John of Gaunt of 1340, although Oudeberg has often been mentioned as the place of John's birth.

For some six centuries the abbey, ever growing in power, formed a centre of the religious, remedial, and educational life of the district, until in 1539 Charles V., who, ten or twelve years later, was a generous donor of 150,000 crowns to the Cathedral of St. Bavon, angered by the resistance of the burghers of the city to his wishes, dissolved the monastery in much the same arbitrary manner as were similar institutions done away with by Henry VIII. of England. Possibly Charles's conscience pricked him, or he was frightened by some of the powerful clerics of his day, for a few years after the destruction of the Abbey in 1539, he caused the relics of St. Bavon to be carried from the



abbey to what was at that time the parish church of Ghent, dedicated to St. John, which ultimately became the Cathedral dedicated to the saint whose relics were deposited in it.

The work of destruction of this Abbey of St. Bavon, which occupied a vast area of ground, was unhappily only too complete.

The ruined abbey buildings have for their chief beauty the picturesque, partly Romanesque, but chiefly fifteenth-century, cloister, and through it one obtains a beautiful vista of the quadrangular garden, filled in summer-time with a perfect blaze of colour and most of the popular and homely Flemish flowers, many of which are those also beloved by English cottagers, and familiar in country gardens.

The Chapel of St. Macaire, which is the name given to the octagonal Romanesque baptistery dating from about 1177, is worth study, and close by is the Chapter House, dating from about the first quarter of the thirteenth century, with a Transition portal and window openings.

Unfortunately, this Chapter House is in a very ruinous condition. Hard by in the pavement are a dozen interesting tombs of red sandstone dating from the eleventh or twelfth centuries. In the chapel itself we noticed a fine piece of early vaulting, with rounded arches of Byzantine type. The capitals of the columns should be noted, as they have some very quaint representations of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. And there is also an interesting relief of the missionary, St. Amand, preaching in Flanders, and a man at arms in stone of the sixteenth century about the time of Van Artevelde.

The old refectory itself, which for a time served as the Church of St. Macaire, has been since a few years ago turned into a local museum containing an ancient fresco supposed to be of St. Louis; a tomb of a monk dating from about 1275, on which is depicted one of the earliest representations of the Franciscan Order; a very beautiful relief brought from Tournai dating from the middle of the fifteenth century, the subject of which is the Nativity; the tomb of Hubert Van Eyck, discovered in 1892, unfortunately very much damaged; and many other interesting fragments of Romanesque Gothic art and sculpture.

On one's return to the town it is quite well worth while to take the pleasant and picturesque, though circuitous route

across the bridges over the upper and lower Scheldt, through the Place Van Eyck to the Quai aux Vaches, and along this to the Place d'Artevelde and along the Rue Digue de Brabant. By this means one obtains a very good idea of the best portion of the more modern part of the city.

Many other interesting and ancient buildings and spots may be found by the curious and enterprising visitor to Ghent. But space will not permit us to describe these in detail. One, however, that should undoubtedly be visited is the Old Steen of Gerard le Diable, near the Cathedral, which is chiefly interesting as being the only remaining example in the city of a medieval fortified house. It dates from the thirteenth century, and has been carefully restored. Now used as a depository for the provincial archives, it can be freely inspected by visitors.

Near the Place d'Artevelde, a little to the north-east of the *Gare du Sud* and reached by the Rue des Violettes, is the *Petite Béguinage de Notre Dame*, a most interesting institution, now containing about 300 sisters and preserving its eighteenth-century character. Its original foundation dates from the middle of the thirteenth century. The beautifully clean and tiny houses which are ranged round the rectangular grassed space, bordered with sheltering trees, form a very picturesque and pleasant sight. Each house possesses its own patron saint, the name of which is inscribed above the door.

The seventeenth-century church on the north-eastern side of the grassy, garden-like space contains a very famous winged picture, the "Assembly of the Saints," by Lucas Horenbault.

The *Grande Béguinage de St. Elizabeth* formerly stood near the *Porte de Bruges*, or Gate of the Rabot, the only portion of which now standing there is its church, dedicated to St. Elizabeth of Hungary. The present *Grande Béguinage*, veritably a town in miniature, enclosed by a wall and moat, lies on the Antwerp Road some distance outside the city, to which place the institution was transferred in 1874, when the ground the ancient foundation covered became needed for city extensions, its present site being obtained for it by the good offices of the Duc d'Arenburg.

For many years Ghent had been noted for its lace and embroidery, which had hitherto been largely produced by

hand in the houses of the town and in the cottages of the surrounding country. These industries of late years were transferred to well-equipped and well-appointed factories, and were rapidly developed by the most modern and perfect machinery which capital could purchase. A new industry was also instituted, that of making agricultural and other machinery, for the manufacture of which the city has of recent years gained a considerable reputation.

From a town which at the end of the eighteenth century contained less than 40,000 inhabitants, it has risen, as it were, from its ashes of ancient greatness to the position of a city boasting a population, with its suburbs, of nearly 200,000. Not only is it nowadays distinguished as a great commercial centre, but as a picturesque and interesting town, and an attractive place in which to reside.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE STORIED CHARM OF ANCIENT BRUGES

WHETHER one comes to what one writer has not inaptly called "dear dead Bruges" through the fertile, though flat piece of country which stretches between it and its ancient rival, Ghent; or from the sea, through at first sand-laden fields, cut into here and there by ditches filled with brackish water, the effect is the same. Once the environing waterways are crossed, and the *Porte St. Croix* or *Porte d'Ostende* is passed, one finds oneself transported into the midst of ancient things and a medieval atmosphere, that can—by the sympathetic soul at least—be literally, as well as metaphorically, felt. The charm of Bruges, its peace, its picturesque decay, its apparent aloofness from the outer world and the fret and fume of modern things, is at once apparent.

If it be by night that one makes one's entry, as we did, from its eastern side, to meet men in armour in the ill-lit, ill-paved, narrow, and tortuous streets; to see court gallants ruffling it in doublet and hose of satin or velvet; fine ladies in trailing gowns of the fifteenth century, and wearing sugar-loaf head-dresses with depending veils; or varlets in leather jerkins, would not come as a shock. There is, in a word, the atmosphere of old Nuremberg or Rotenburg about the town.

No ancient city such as Bruges should be entered by way of the unromantic railway-line. The illusion of old-time peace and ancient things is very evanescent. It can be as easily destroyed in the mind as dew-spangled cobwebs by gambolling conies in the gorse on an October morning. It can even be checked from having existence.

What, indeed, in common have railways and shrill whistles,

tootling horns, and touting *cochers* eager to secure victims to overcharge and drive clatteringly over cobbled streets long miles, when the hotel required is but just round the corner, with such a town as Bruges?

As we passed along through the silent and almost deserted streets leading by tortuous ways from the *Porte St. Croix* to the Grande Place, shadowy figures, their modernity of gesture and clothing veiled by a kindly blue-grey obscurity, flitted now and again into view. A belated little Sister of the Poor, with the white head-dress giving a ghostly touch to the flitting figure, and with her voluminous robe lost against the dark shadows of the street, crossed our path. Suddenly the carillon rang out—the chimes of the famous belfry of which Longfellow wrote:

“ In the market-place of Bruges  
Stands the belfry old and brown ;  
Thrice consumed and thrice rebuilt,  
Still it watches o’er the town ”—

rang forth in sweet, thin notes of melody as though falling down to us from amidst the glittering stars of the evening sky, the music seeming to recall with mysterious distinctness the romantic story of the sleepy town.

Into our mind crowded many memories of former visits, and of what we had learned of the “ storied ” as well as of the historic charms of the ancient buildings, narrow byways, and silent palaces of bygone days, so that it was with almost a shock that one came upon the Grande Place blazing with lights, and echoing with the tinkle of the pianos at the cafés and restaurants and the wail of the violins of a “ ladies’ ” orchestra at the *Café Sirène*.

Nasal American voices, and the loud laughter of tourists enjoying themselves, as though unconscious of their environment and of all that was wonderful and beautified by the tenderness of a summer night, struck us with a sense of incongruity, as though the modern restless life of Ostend, Brussels, or Paris had been transplanted suddenly to this time-worn and sleepy town.

We would have sought an ancient, silent inn; but these have passed away during the last two decades, and in their place are modernized tourist hotels, most of them neither much worse nor much better than those of other towns. To one of these we in due time came, leaving the quietude of

the ancient street in which it stood for the meretricious, gilded looking-glasses and money-making air of bustle within.

But this modernized hostelry possessed one saving grace, as we discovered when we arose next morning, to find the ancient weather- and time-worn environing roofs bathed in soft, early morning sunlight. Our window possessed a wonderful view from the back of the house over the wild waste of ancient roofs and lichen-stained and crumbling walls, with a charming vista of the tower and spire of Notre Dame in the distance.

Bruges (in Flemish anciently *Brugge*), half-hidden as it were in the great flat plain of Flanders which stretches to it from the sea, and beyond it still further inland, arose in the Middle Ages on a spot where many canals and waterways intersected, including the little River Reye, anciently navigable, but now merged in the canal. It was a place destined soon to become famous in commerce and art. Originally the capital town of a small countship, it in time grew to hold a proud position, and gained for itself the sounding title of "The Venice of the North." Where the Reye flowed in those times into the long-lost Zwin was one of the safest harbours in the Low Countries, and alongside the quays of Bruges and in the haven of Damme towards the sea in due time lay or rode at anchor the ships of most European and many extra-European nations. Even so early as the beginning of the thirteenth century it enjoyed the position of the central market of the great Hanseatic League. And houses still remain on its now almost deserted and tree-grown quays which were the palaces of merchants famous in their time, and the warehouses of the world. Into Bruges came the rich fabrics of the East—the products of Turkish and even Persian looms; the bales of English wool, shorn from Southdown and other noted herds, to be exported later on, after having been spun into the famous Flemish broadcloths which enjoyed an European reputation. From the then port of Bruges, too, were sent forth the laces for which the deft fingers of Flemish women have always been noted; the tapestries and the linen spun from the flax of not far distant Courtrai. Very soon, with this great growth of medieval trade, canals were cut, and existing watercourses deepened so as to provide means of intercommunication with other then flourishing towns



and cities—amongst them Ypres, Ghent, Furnes, Sluys, the French border town of Dunkerque—and with the North Sea.

The beginnings of this commercial city were to be found grouped around the Grande Place, which was in those days, as still at the present time, the centre of the town, and in the neighbourhood of the Hôtel de Ville on the Place du Bouy, and extended to the Church of St. Sauveur, now the cathedral church, and the Dyver.

The greater enceinte, which was fortified in 1297, existed until the extension of the suburbs in 1899, and formed a boulevard nearly seven kilometres in length. Upon the earthworks, thrown up at the end of the thirteenth century, numerous windmills were erected. All these, with the exception of two close to the *Porte de Ste. Croix*, have now disappeared. The uselessness of windmills from an industrial point of view ultimately robbed the city of one of its most distinctive medieval features, which formerly many of the ancient Belgian towns had in common with those of Holland. The old ramparts nowadays have been turned into promenades and planted with lime-trees, chestnuts, and elms, where are also very picturesque gardens, the favourite walks of the more sedate inhabitants of the city.

Bruges ultimately became a great market-place between Novgorod and the East, and during the thirteenth century the town was enriched by all the wealth that commerce was able to bring it. It also possessed important trading companies, and all the machinery necessary for the loading and unloading of great ships.

The countries of the Hanseatic League contributed not a little to this rapid commercial development. The Hansa of London, founded somewhere about the twelfth century, had been established by the citizens of Bruges. Twenty-two towns banded themselves together, and Bruges became the chief warehouse, or mart, of all the towns within the Hanseatic League. By the fourteenth century the city had, within its boundaries, banks and agents of all the principal nations, and numerous consuls also had their residences there. In 1456 the chronicles tell us no less than 150 foreign vessels came into the docks of Bruges on a single day. And at the commencement of the sixteenth century an old writer, Van Male, saw the same thing happen, and German traders alone bought at Bruges in one day no less than 2,600 pieces of

cloth spun in the manufactories of Poperinghe and of Tourcoing for exportation to Poland and Muscovy.

In the streets in those days walked merchant princes who rivalled in wealth and power those of London of two centuries later. The quays, now long since almost deserted except for artists and dreamers, were thronged with stevedores, the seamen of many nations, bustling clerks with pens, ink-horns, and bills of lading, and the groups of curious idlers which are always found by the waterside. Early in the sixteenth century to Bruges came the brilliant and intellectual Court of the Dukes of Burgundy, which circumstance was destined not alone to affect the history and fame of the city of that day, but to exert an influence upon it which is felt even at the present time. It was when under the dominion of these famous Dukes that the rich burghers and the foreign merchant princes commenced to gather together within the confines of the city by means of generous patronage a group of notable painters, whose works are visited daily in this twentieth century by art lovers and tourists from all quarters of the world almost as though pilgrim shrines. It is to them, too, that Bruges owes not a few of the finest buildings, which are the pride of this city of pathetic decay.

The periodical markets or fairs, existing probably prior to the time of Baldwin of Constantinople, and developed by Marguerite of Constantinople and by Guy de Dampierre, organized by admirably-drawn charters, contributed to this commercial movement, which had ultimately a development without parallel. The city then was the scene of activity almost equal to that of the great streets of London of to-day and the principal commercial quarters of Paris and Vienna. Speaking of this epoch and of its commerce, a well-known and distinguished writer on the period said: "The town presented an animated and prosperous sight. The markets, streets, and quays were thronged by crowds of busy people almost of all nationalities and of all classes, whilst a great number of the principal merchants came to Bruges from all parts of Europe. It was here that the battle of commerce was fought out, each one clamouring for attention and preference. Here were to be found those who bought hemp, Dutch flax, English wool, Spanish skins and hides, Italian silks, the sheeting and cloths of Brabant and of Flanders,

the wines of France, Portugal, and Greece, the ironmongery and hardware of Germany, with a multitude of manufactured articles of horn, ivory, boxwood, and other woods, glass, iron, pewter, leather, brass, silver and gold. In the middle of the market were to be seen the richest merchants of the Hanseatic League, who were recognizable by their elegant costumes and by the badges of their powerful guilds. On the outskirts were gathered an unbroken line of money-changers, the tables of whom shone with piles of the currency of all nations.

“Bruges was truly called the Venice of the North, situate on the banks of an arm of the sea which ran through its marshes, as is the other Venice on its lagoons, glorying the one and the other in their artistic splendours, and gathering to themselves the commerce of all the then known world, where was to be found heaped together the riches of Europe, Africa, and of Asia.” It, by this epoch, had an estimated population of nearly 200,000 souls.

In the immediate neighbourhood 50,000 workmen found employment, the most part in the manufacture of cloth. And cloth merchants, mercers, and brewers formed the chief of the nine members of the Town Council. The weavers of wool, the fullers, the shearers and dyers, formed amongst themselves the second members of this body. Such corporations or guilds were in reality the under-vassals of the city, having their military and financial duties, their political and industrial rights, sharply defined.

The story of the decline of proud, prosperous, and richly-dowered Bruges would form a long, romantic, and pathetic volume in itself; but we may briefly mention as the principal cause of this decline the silting up of the *Zwin*, a general term given to creeks on the Belgian sea-coast, but one more especially attached to the great arm of the sea which put Bruges in communication with the North Sea by way of Sluys.

Already in 1410 navigation between Bruges and Sluys had become difficult. In 1470 large ships were no longer able to reach Damme, and five years later the port of the city had almost disappeared under the alluvial deposits. One can see what had happened to the *Zwin* in the year 1562 by an examination of the plan of Mark Gheeraerts.

About the commencement of the fifteenth century we see



the town of Bruges struggling during a period of a hundred years against the silting up of the channel and harbour. Numberless committees of inquiry were formed for the purpose of discovering the cause of the evil, and feasible remedies, but in those days committees and plans do not appear to have resulted in any serious grappling with the insidious enemy which was destroying the prosperity of Bruges.

There were other secondary causes, however, which tended to paralyze the commercial enterprise and energy of Bruges. First of these were the violent insurrections against Maximilian, which have been put down as a great cause of the decadence, but which did not, after all, exercise more than a temporarily disastrous influence. Another cause, much more serious, was the gradual break-up of that great trading organization, the Hanseatic League, and more especially the disorganization and disbanding of the towns forming the German League, which had great trading interests and a bank at Bruges in the sixteenth century. They had, at the zenith of its prosperity, more than 300 agents there, who were held in high esteem, and from whom several illustrious German families trace their origin.

However, in the last years of the fifteenth century the Hanseatic towns lived in a state of dissension, and the quarrel had the effect of greatly weakening the Confederacy. The prestige of the League, whose principal members transgressed, declined in the eyes of the German people and rulers, and its bank became insolvent. The rules and regulations which in the past had made it powerful were now disregarded, and, in spite of the privileges which had been granted it, Amsterdam and Antwerp obtained the commerce of which Bruges had formerly the monopoly in the country, and, in consequence, merchants began to emigrate and settle in these towns. Another cause of the Belgian city's decline was the rise into prominence and prosperity of the great English ports of London, Bristol, and Southampton, in particular.

Yet another cause was the discovery of America, which brought about a very profound change in the method of commerce, and led to the commercial world adopting a new system of transacting business, which may be said to have marked the beginning of the modern era.

Bruges did not adapt itself to the required changes.

Its commercial organization remained out of date, and incapable of contending against the new methods brought about by the employment of a large amount of capital. Moreover, the city had no longer its own mercantile marine, which it had neglected since the thirteenth century.

But another cause of decadence must also be pointed out, which has not yet been referred to, but the influence of which cannot be over-estimated. We refer to the religious dissensions. These, according to a well-known English writer, who has made a study of the migration of industrial life and decline of trade in certain European medieval towns, gave the last blow to the commercial and financial prosperity of Bruges. From about the years 1567-1584 most disastrous intrigues disturbed the city almost continually. It was especially about the year 1577 that these became most formidable. The Bishop of Bruges, Henri Drieux, was taken prisoner and incarcerated at Ghent. The churches of the surrounding country were, many of them, pulled down, and the city itself opened its gates to Ryhove in March, 1578. The conqueror placed an heretical magistrate at the head of affairs, who chiefly favoured his co-religionists. The churches of the city were given over to pillage, several monks and nuns were burnt alive, others were banished, and fanaticism pursued its work of destruction by defacing the images and smelting down the bells.

Thus, in the middle of all these troubles, the town gradually became almost abandoned. In the records of the period, which have been preserved, occur the names of the important inhabitants and families, many of them nobles and merchant princes, who left Bruges at this time, for the most part never to return.

They were of all nationalities, and the disaster of their emigration was not repaired at the peace of 1584; in addition to which, fifty years of uncertainty followed this peace, with the coming and going of armies, accompanied by numerous skirmishes and battles, and the commerce of the country, which only prospers in peace, finally fixed upon Antwerp as a most tranquil centre.

This briefly, then, is the history of the downfall of Bruges.

Thus it will be seen that the city reached its zenith of glory in the fifteenth century. The magnificence distinguishing the Court of the Dukes of Burgundy, which was held at

Bruges, the wealth of the noble families and the rich merchants, and the artistic taste and enterprise exhibited by all classes of the population, contributed to a large extent to enhance the fame with which the city shone at this epoch. Before long, however, of all this wealth and prosperity there was scarcely a remembrance.

Happily, the hour of awakening would appear to have come at last to Bruges, owing partly to the reopening up of its communication with the sea by the establishment of a port in deep water on the coast between the flourishing seaside resort of Blankenberghe and Heyst, and by a deep and direct maritime canal, and other similar works. In the year 1902 seagoing ships arrived at Bruges for the first time after a long period.

The *Canal Maritime*, leading from the new seaport of Zee-Brugge to Bruges, is some 250 feet in width and about 25 feet deep. It was constructed during the years 1895-1905, at the immense cost of £1,750,000. It has not yet, however, had the effect anticipated of reviving the commerce of Bruges to anything approaching its former prosperity and greatness. There is another canal, leading from Bruges to Ostend, but few vessels nowadays are seen traversing it, though ships of 500 tons and under could do so. The few we have observed along this almost deserted waterway always appeared to be rather engaged in local and internal than seaborne trade.

The royal proclamation of July 12, 1899, incorporated with the territory of the city the *commune* of St. Pierre, on the seashore, and of parts of the *communes* of Coolkerke, Dudzeele, Uitkerke, and Lisseweghe, so as to guarantee to the town of Bruges an outlet on the sea at the harbour Zee-Brugge, which latter name is, however, an anomaly, meaning in Flemish "Sea Bridge." The better term, of course, would be, in Flemish, *Brugge-Aan-Zee*, or, in French, *Bruges-sur-Mer*.

The city of to-day is but half the size of that fair town of the early sixteenth century; its population possibly not one-fifth. Most of the great palaces of the foreign and other merchants of the Hanseatic League have fallen gradually into decay, and many have by now disappeared. But there is much of interest still left, of domestic as well as ecclesiastical architecture, and behind the curtained windows of the



greater houses of the burghers—the ancestors of some of whom were great merchant princes of the Middle Ages—is led a life of seclusion strangely out of keeping with the century in which we live, but equally strangely in keeping with the atmosphere of the ancient town, its deserted quays, silent by-streets, and air of eternal peace and age.

Amongst the most famous of artists who lived in the city in the golden age of Bruges may be mentioned Hans Memlinc, from about 1477-1494; Jan Van Eyck, who lived there between the years 1428 and 1440; Colard Mansion, the famous printer of Bruges, and one of the leaders in the typographical art. Last, but by no means least, Caxton, the first English printer, who lived at the English factory known as the *Domus Anglorum* for a period of thirty years from 1446-1476. Caxton was originally an English merchant settled in the city, and it is supposed (although it must be recorded that several authorities incline to the belief that Cologne was the place) that the earliest printed book in English was issued from the press at Bruges.

The commercial decay of the town to which we already have referred had caused many of its most splendid monuments to fall into ruins, and the fury of the Protestant iconoclasts of the sixteenth century continued the work of destruction. To gain even a faint idea of what Bruges was at the height of its splendour, it is necessary to see the picture of the city engraved in 1562 by Mark Gheeraerts, of which the town still possesses the copperplate.

Most of those who wish to study and know the grey old city, we fancy, turn their steps at first to the Grande Place, or in Flemish *Groote Markt*, nowadays the centre of the life of the town, and formerly the forum and meeting-place of the burghers when they were summoned to arms by the belfry chimes to repel an attack upon the town, or to set forth upon one of their numerous expeditions against neighbouring cities. In the centre of the square is a more than life-size modern group of the Flemish heroes, Pieter de Coninck and Jan Breidel, by the sculptor Paul Devigne. These two men were masters of Guilds, and the leaders of the citizens at the massacre of the French garrison on May 8, 1302, which event assisted the Flemish to gain their freedom from the yoke of the Kings of France. They also were two of the leaders of the burgher forces at the Battle



S. URSULA ARRIVES AT COLOGNE

HANS MEMLING

*S. John's Hospital, Bruges*





of Spurs outside the walls of Courtrai, on July 11 the same year.

The beautiful and historic belfry which overshadows the Grande Place, was, in a sense, the sign-manual of Bruges' freedom. Permission to erect such a belfry as an evidence of independence, and for the purpose of summoning the citizens to arms on occasion, was one of the first privileges which the German trading towns always sought in the Middle Ages from their feudal lords. The present tower—to the three-times destruction of which reference has already been made—replaced the first one of wood, and was commenced in or about the year 1291. It took a century to build. The octagon is of stone, not of brick, as is the rest of the buildings, and in it is hung the famous carillon. The *Halles* which adjoin the belfry were undoubtedly built prior to the year 1239, and comprised two parts, both of them raised or erected upon pile work or the filled-up bed of the Boterbeke near the Reye. These buildings have been several times altered and repaired, especially during the sixteenth century. Indeed, the windows of the first floor are the only ones which preserve anything of their primitive form.

It was between the two main buildings that the brick belfry was erected, with a wooden campanile, in the thirteenth century. The latter was burned in 1280, when the bells in their fall broke the vaulting of the roof of the room in which were kept the communal archives in the tower. The work of rebuilding and repairing commenced a few years later, and was finished, it is generally believed, about 1296, the new bells being placed in position during the years 1294-1299. Until the fifteenth century the belfry consisted only of two quadrangular stories flanked by turrets, and covered with a saddle-shaped roof. The lantern and elegant octagonal stone campanile dated from 1482-1486. A spire forty-five feet high, the contract for building which is still preserved, was erected in 1483-1484. This was crowned two years later by a statue of St. Michael 16 feet high, holding in its hand a cross and floating banner, and with its foot on a dragon about 15 feet in length. The tower was struck by lightning on January 25, 1493, and the spire destroyed. The latter was restored in the taste of the day at the commencement of the sixteenth century, crowned by the Lion

of Flanders. In 1741 the spire was once more destroyed by lightning, and it has never been rebuilt. The topmost balustrade, placed there in 1822, was restored in 1901.

It will scarcely be noticed, perhaps, save by the keen observer, but the tower has an inclination out of the perpendicular towards the south-east amounting to about eighteen inches, which has been the case—according to documentary evidence—since its first erection. The lower windows are of the simpler form of Early Gothic architecture, those in the octagon are of a later period. In the centre is a recess containing a figure of the Virgin and Child placed there in 1819 after the destruction of an earlier group by the French during the early part of the war following the Revolution; and below it are smaller figures bearing escutcheons. It was from the balcony between these that in ancient times the laws promulgated by and proclamations of the Counts of Flanders were read to the townsfolk assembled for the purpose in the Grande Place below.

This statue of the Virgin, and those upon the *Halles* and Hôtel de Ville, and upon most of the ancient monuments, on the bridges and at the corners of the streets (many of them remaining to the present day) gave to Bruges in the Middle Ages the name of “the town of Mary,” or, in Flemish, Maria-stad.

From the summit of the belfry, which should be ascended, notwithstanding the four hundred and two steps by which this coign of vantage must be reached, is a most interesting and far extending panoramic view not only of the quaint old town, with its slumberous waterways, tortuous streets, historic buildings, and picturesque roofs, but of the Plain of Flanders, dotted over with towns and villages. Seen thus, from an altitude of upwards of 350 feet, the surrounding and distant country, which when one is travelling through it seems flat and rather uninteresting, looks much more beautiful and picturesque. High above the town one can the more easily imagine the use and importance of such a watch-tower in ancient times, more especially before the invention of fire-arms of large calibre and precision. From this look out the whole country to the seacoast, the approaches of the town by water from Sluys and Damme, the network of canals, the roads leading to and from Ypres, Courtrai, Tournai, Ghent, Antwerp, and other smaller towns, lie spread out as though

on a large scale plan. No one, not even a solitary horseman, could approach the town by daylight from any quarter without his presence being immediately observed.

One can easily imagine with what anxiety the sentinels and look-out men scanned the roads and canals in the troublous days of the French domination, and later on when an English army was before Ypres, and over-running the land, and still later, when the French Republican forces crossed the frontier, and brought death to the inhabitants of Bruges and Ghent, and destruction to many of the historic ecclesiastical buildings.

The famous carillon, or chimes, date only from the year 1680, and the mechanism which works them from a century later. The original bells were more than once destroyed on the occasions of the burning of the spire and upper portion of the belfry.

The *Halles*, built about the middle of the thirteenth century, stand on either side of the belfry, and form a somewhat severe though very fine example of Early Gothic architecture. The left-hand wing or portion of the building was formerly the Cloth Hall, recalling to mind the days when the manufacture of woollen goods was one of the chief industries of Bruges and its commercial and industrial rival Ghent.

Though as late as 1830 the aspect of the town was very much as in medieval times, since then unfortunately quite a number of the older gables and houses have been destroyed, amongst them some of the most beautiful. Each year unhappily the bad taste of certain owners and tenants of the more ancient houses has led to other interesting architectural features being done away with or so modernized for purposes of trade, or other reasons, as to be entirely spoiled.

In spite, however, of all this the town does not lack picturesque corners.

There is, indeed, scarcely a street which does not still contain a remarkable house-front, or maybe, some detail of construction or carving, stonework or ancient doorways, in which the town is so rich, worth the attention of visitors. Bruges, of all cities of Belgium, it may be claimed is one which has best preserved its medieval aspect, and it may very well be called the Nuremberg of Flanders. In artistic reputation it certainly surpasses even that celebrated Bavarian city.

Around the Grande Place are grouped many houses worthy



of careful examination. Some of them, it is true, are modern re-erections or considerably restored, but in both cases the work has been usually well done, and the new buildings are in character with the surviving ancient ones. It is almost impossible to realize as one rambles round this wide, open space, that in the Middle Ages seagoing ships of considerable burthen were able to come close up here to discharge and take in their cargoes, bringing wool and other raw material, and taking away the woollen goods and linen for which the town was especially famed, and the Eastern merchandise which had been brought to Bruges, as the mart of Northern Europe.

Among the chief buildings to be noted is the square, castle-like house which stands at the corner of the Rue St. Amand, formerly belonging to the Bouchoute family, and having additional interest from the fact that it is traditionally supposed to have been occupied by Charles II. during his exile, after the Battle of Worcester, about the year 1656. Whilst living at Bruges the citizens gave the exiled King of England the title of "King of the Guild of Archers," one of the most ancient and honourable connected with the town. Both he and his two brothers, the Dukes of York and Gloucester, resided at Bruges. The house in which they are said to have lived is a handsome one, and one of the best medieval brick buildings in Bruges, but it was indifferently restored about 1850. The façade is adorned with a golden lion, an example of the many symbols to be found on houses in Bruges, in addition to the Lion of Flanders, crowned, and wearing a collar with a pendant cross, the *Toison d'Or*, or "Golden Fleece," the badge of the famous Order, founded in 1430 by Philippe le Bel, and of singular appropriateness to a country which in medieval times owed so much of its wealth and commercial greatness to wool. The device consists of a sheep's skin suspended from a collar. The Flemish emblem of a swan also frequently appears in decorative work; and the Bear of Bruges is another, which one comes across on the façades of old houses, in carvings, and elsewhere. The emblem of St. Donatian, the patron saint of Bruges, Archbishop of Rheims, consists of a wheel and five lighted candles. This, too, is frequently seen.

Another historically interesting house is that next door to the one supposed to have been occupied by Charles II. It is



THE DEATH OF S. URSULA

HANS MEMLINC

*S. John's Hospital, Bruges*





known as the *Cranenburg*, and was the residence of Maximilian, King of the Romans, for a period of some twelve days from February 4 or 5, 1488.

The King was virtually a prisoner of the citizens of Bruges because he would not redress the many grievances they had against him, and refused to give up his son Philip, who was heir to the crown of the Netherlands, into the custody of Charles VIII., King of France. Maximilian was afterwards removed to the *Gruthuise*, the celebrated residence of Jean Ros, whence, a short while afterwards, he went forth into the square to take the oaths required of him by the citizens, regarding amongst other things the bringing back of his son Philip to Flanders, and the granting of a general amnesty.

For the occasion an altar was raised on the very spot where a few days previously Maximilian's friends and advisers, Jacob Van Dudzeele, Lord of Ghistelle; Gilbert du Homme, a Norman; Jan Van Nieuwenhove, and others, had been executed. We are told that near by was erected also a magnificent throne, or daïs, overshadowed by a splendidly embroidered canopy. On the altar itself was placed a Book of the Gospels, and set amid flaming candles the Host itself, a portion of the true Cross, and the relics of St. Donatian. Kneeling before this, and (we are told by a contemporary writer), seemingly with great fear and reverence Maximilian took the appointed oaths. In a voice which, it has been recorded, was sweet and persuasive, and capable of "melting a heart of stone," he declared: "Of our own free will we swear and promise in good faith on the precious body of St. Donatian, and on the Canon of the Mass, to fully carry out the treaty of peace, and the alliance which we have concluded with our well-beloved estates. . . . And on our princely and royal word, on our honour, and on our faith, we hereby promise never to violate it." Then the Bishop of Tournai solemnly pronounced a blessing upon all those who should keep the treaty so agreed upon, and cursed those who should break it. This impressive and historic scene was followed by a *Te Deum* in the Church of St. Donatian, and a banquet. Philippe of Cleves, who had only just then reached Bruges, took the oath to assist all the Flemish people against those who should break the treaty, and then Maximilian was once more free to depart to his own château at Maele, after an imprisonment which had lasted nearly three months.

Four days later, Maximilian, having entrenched himself behind the impregnable walls of the fortress of Hulse, felt himself secure enough to issue a proclamation, stating that he would not hold himself bound to observe the treaty nor to perform the oaths he had taken.

Such, then, was one of the most stirring incidents connected with the history of the city, and one which throws a strong light upon the standard of princely morals and the intrigues of the Middle Ages, when men's oaths, even of the most solemn character, were often lightly taken and easily broken.

It is with little wonder we read that, once more deceived by Maximilian, the Flemings were soon in revolt, and the call to arms was sounded throughout Flanders.

The conduct of his kinsman, Philippe of Cleves, is in bright contrast to that of Maximilian himself. Let Philippe speak from the pages of the letter he wrote on hearing of Maximilian's breach of faith.

"My lord Prince," it ran, "fulfilling my oath, and for fear of offending God our Creator, I have promised to aid and assist the three provinces of Flanders. This with very great regret of heart I now inform you of, for inasmuch as it toucheth your exalted person as your most humble kinsman, I would fain do you all service and honour. But inasmuch as it toucheth the observance of my oath I am bound to God, the Sovereign King of kings."

The story of Bruges is full of the clash of arms, the intrigues which afflicted Europe throughout the Middle Ages, the treachery and noble deeds which disfigure and adorn the pages of all history. But for a detailed recital of them we have no space here.

To Louis de Maele, Count of Flanders, Bruges owes one of its most gracious and beautiful architectural treasures, the Hôtel de Ville which stands on the south side of the Place du Bourg. By many, this delightful specimen of Middle Gothic architecture, which at once fascinates the student, is considered the most perfect building of its kind in Northern Europe, though doubtless this claim will be disputed in the future as it has been in the past. The foundation stone was laid by Louis on January 4, 1376. And three years later the building was almost completed. One Gilles de Man was at that date busy painting and

gilding the statuary which so profusely adorns it, and for which work we are told the artist received the sum of seven livres and fourteen escalins. The completion of the work was, however, soon after delayed, for early in the following year trouble arose with the neighbouring city of Ghent, and there appears good reason to believe that the beautiful building was not finished till about the year 1420. Who the architect was seems uncertain, although a very eminent antiquarian, Verschelde, for some time the architect to the corporation of Bruges, suggests Jean de Valenciennes, who it is known designed and executed the sculpture on the building, much of which was destroyed at the time of the French Revolution, and has since been replaced by the work of quite modern Belgian artists.

The chief feature of interest for students of architecture in the façade of the building is the arrangement which appears to have originated at Bruges of long panels or arcades in which are placed windows one above the other in such a manner as to give them the appearance of being a series of long single windows reaching from the basement to the spring of the roof.

In the lower tier of sculpture one is able to distinguish the Annunciation on the right and left of the doorway, with other figures of the prophets and saints. In the upper tiers stand statues of the Counts of Flanders, whilst the reliefs placed just below the windows of the first floor represent incidents in Biblical history—among them the Building of Solomon's Temple, David before Saul, and the Judgment of Solomon.

The roof of the great Hall should be specially noticed, as it is a very fine example of pendent Gothic wooden work. The corbels, dating from 1397-1402, represent the twelve months of the year. The keystones of the vault, which was painted in 1404, are of Biblical scenes and figures of saints. There are some fine historical paintings by the late Albrecht de Vriendt (1843-1900) and his brother Julius, to whom the task of completing the scheme of Albrecht's work was confided. The subjects of these pictures, which deal with the civic, ecclesiastical and commercial history and incidents in the development of Bruges, are particularly worth study, and will in themselves give the careful observer a vivid and fairly accurate idea of the life of the city in



medieval times, and of the history and romance bound up with it. Among the chief subjects we may mention in passing "The Mass of Bruges," "The Foundation of the Order of the Golden Fleece," "The Consecration of the Zwin Canal," in 1402; "The Magistrates and City Fathers Visiting the Studio of Jan Van Eyck," in 1431; "Theodoric of Alsace bringing the Holy Blood to the Church of St. Basil," in 1150; "Count Louis Van Maele laying the Foundation Stone of the Hôtel de Ville," and "The Officials of Bruges renewing the Rights and Privileges of the Hanseatic League," in 1307.

There are two interesting buildings adjoining the Hôtel de Ville. The one to the left is the *Maison de l'Ancien Greffe Flamand*, or the old Municipal Record Office, now a court of law. It is chiefly interesting from the fact that it was the second building erected in the city in the style of the Renaissance in 1535-1537. Of the first, erected in 1495, nothing now remains. The frontage of the surviving building had been allowed to fall into decay before the time of the French Revolution, and at the sack of Bruges the work of destruction was almost completed. The French pulled down the statues which were the work of Guillaume Aerts, and much defaced the rest of the carving and sculptures of the façade. The building was restored during the seventies, and the portions which had been decorated in colours in 1537 were renewed according to the original design so far as ascertainable from the faint traces remaining. The Court-room, which has been decorated in good taste, deserves a visit, and the old doorway, supposed to be the work of Lancelot Blondeel in 1544, was formerly in the Cathedral.

The famous *Chapelle du Saint Sang* stands to the right of the Hôtel de Ville, but of the original building of Theodoric of Alsace, who was elected Count of Flanders in 1128, only the lower floor remains. Over this in the fifteenth century was erected a second and more ornate structure (as was also the case with the *Sainte Chapelle* of St. Louis of France in Paris) in which nowadays is preserved the Holy Blood which Theodoric brought back with him from Palestine in 1149. These drops of blood of our Saviour were said to have been preserved by Joseph of Arimathea, and were obtained at fabulous cost by Theodoric, and by him given to the city of Bruges. The church is dedicated to St. Basil,

a Greek monk little known in the West of Europe, who was the founder of Eastern monasticism. Nearly all the decorations and works of art in this beautiful little *Chapelle du Saint Sang* have some reference to the Holy Blood, its miraculous preservation, and incidents which occurred during its transport to Bruges.

The portal and staircase in the Flamboyant Style, with what an American girl once called its "wishing-bone arches," are wonderfully beautiful, and cannot fail to excite the admiration of even those who know little or nothing of the science or history of architecture. There is a fine figure of St. Leonard with his symbolic fetters under a Gothic niche on the exterior of the building.

During the troubles in the days of Philip II., and even more during the unsettled times of the French Revolution, the chapel suffered greatly. About 1818 it was restored, after its lower portion had been used for years as a common prison for disorderly persons, drunkards, and even dogs, and having narrowly escaped entire demolition on account of the parlous state of decay into which it had fallen. The decorations and restoration, though effective, are not in the best taste, and are somewhat bizarre in character. It is a pity that the *Noble Confrérie du Précieux Sang*—which to-day consists of a provost and thirty members, all of whom must be of noble birth—do not undertake at least the redecoration of this interesting chapel in better style.

The building has modern stained-glass windows—good of their kind—in which are portraits of the Burgundian Princes, from the beginning of the dynasty down to the time of Maria Theresa of Austria and Francis I. The fine large window which faces the high altar has represented in it the History of the Passion, the Origin of the Sacred Blood, and the incidents accompanying its transport to Bruges by the Flemish Crusaders. At the top of the window is the emblematical figure of the pelican feeding its young with its own blood.

On the right of the chapel is a small one, separated from it by an arcade of three arches, in which is the tabernacle or canopy under which the Sacred Blood is exhibited every Friday. This famous relic, which has from the date of its presentation to the city been held in the greatest reverence by the citizens of Bruges, is contained in a phial, placed in a crystal cylinder by the Bishop of Ancone in 1388.

The Museum of the Confraternity is on the first floor, and amongst its many treasures is the beautiful reliquary in silver-gilt, containing the precious drops of the Blood of our Saviour. It is adorned with figures of Christ, the Virgin, St. Basil, the patron saint of the church, and St. Donatian. This famous and great reliquary is only used when the Blood is carried in procession on the first Monday after May 2. The pageant is remarkably picturesque and impressive, and one well worth seeing as it passes on its way through the ancient streets and amid the kneeling, reverent throng gathered from all parts of Belgium. The white and brilliant vestments of the priests, the white surplices of the choir and others contrasting with the sombre colour-tones of buildings and of the masses of sightseers.

The interesting portraits by P. Pourbus of the members of the Confraternity of the Sacred Blood, painted about the middle of the sixteenth century, should also be noticed. There is a triptych dating from the early part of the same century by an unknown artist depicting the Crucifixion, and Gerard David's fine work (by some considered the art treasure of the Museum) is also a triptych placed on the right-hand wall. The subjects are the Burial of the Saviour, the Maries, St. John and Nicodemus, with an attendant, who is catching the Blood on a dish as it flows from the wounds. The wing pictures are of the Magdalen with Cleophas, and the preservation of the Crown of Thorns by Joseph of Arimathea. The work is distinguished in particular by reason of the delicate and detailed portraiture of the faces.

The lower chapel is an unusually fine specimen of Late Romanesque architecture, and dates from about the middle of the twelfth century. The contrast of its short, heavy columns and round arches with the lighter and Later Gothic work of the upper building is most noticeable. There is an interesting medieval relief, representing a baptism with a hovering dove, above the entrance to the eastern chapel.

On the eastern side of the Place du Bourg stands the *Palais de Justice*, an uninteresting and heavy-looking building erected upon the site of the ancient palace of the Counts of Flanders, which succeeded the older building, known as the *Louwe*, about 1440. Parts of the Renaissance building which was erected between 1520 and 1608 remain.

In the Court-room, or ancient hall of the Guild, is one of



the most remarkable and beautiful Renaissance fireplaces in Flanders. Almost the whole side of the room is occupied by it. The work of the artist Lancelot Blondeel and of Guyot de Beaugrant de Malines, it was executed for the Council of the Liberty of Bruges in honour of the Treaty of Cambrai after the Battle of Pavia, by which Francis V. of France was compelled to acknowledge the independence of Flanders in 1529. The fireplace consists of two portions: the upper part is of oak, and the lower (or chimneypiece proper) of black Dinant marble. The latter has four bas-reliefs in white alabaster representing the History of Susannah, which subject would appear to have been selected with a view to giving Guyot de Beaugrant an opportunity of showing his knowledge of the nude figure. There are genii by the same artist at the corners of the frieze, and the whole work is a good example of the Pagan taste of the period. The upper portion of the oak carving has a fine centre statue of Charles V. and busts of his father, Philippe le Bel, and mother, Johanna of Spain, nicknamed "the Mad." The former bust is not well placed. To the right and left are statues of other Counts of Flanders and Sovereigns, among them Maximilian and Mary of Burgundy, Charles' paternal grandfather and grandmother; Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, his maternal grandfather and grandmother.

The tapestry on the walls, though interesting, is modern, made at Inglemunster from some fragments which were discovered preserved in the cellar of the ancient building.

As one crosses the little tree-planted portion of the northern side of the square one treads upon the site of the ancient cathedral church of St. Donatian, which was destroyed by the army of the French Revolutionists in 1799.

In the streets environing this square are many interesting and ancient buildings, which space does not permit us to describe in detail, or even to refer to individually. They form the treasure trove of the student and lover of the past.

To the *Hôpital de St. Jean*, that picturesque medieval building full of historic memories and containing the wonderful work of Hans Memlinc, one can come by several routes, but the adventurous and the lover of the picturesque will be well advised to do so by way of the Place des Tanneurs, charming Quai du Rosaire, and along the canal, which can be

reached through the archway leading between the Hôtel de Ville and the *Ancien Greffe*. If the route be a little devious, one is amply repaid by the fine, and perhaps the most picturesque, view of all one obtains of the Hôtel de Ville and Belfry. Moreover, one can pass through the interesting and strangely quaint *Marché aux Poissons*, set a little back from the quay, through the window of one of the last shops or houses on the western side of which a wonderful view of the tower and spire of distant Notre Dame is obtained, if one but asks permission with a few courteous words and a smile.

All along the quays are houses of interest, strange types of street merchants, and what one is tempted to class as human survivals of the bygone days. Old men and women who appear to have stepped out of the canvases of the early nineteenth-century Flemish artists, seemingly aloof from all modern progress as regards both their attire and methods of thought.

By such a fascinating deviation from the "route direct" one comes at length to the famous and picturesque Hospital of St. John, with its tottering and crumbling walls almost slipping into the water, and at the time of our visit beautified by greenery and yellow and brown wallflowers. This foundation of Augustinian brothers and nuns dates from as early as 1188, and maintains even at the present day within and without its medieval character. It is not only one of the most ancient institutions in Bruges, but in the whole of Europe; and the "brothers" and nuns still tend the sick in the original building, though this of late years has been largely added to. Although a visit to the hospital as a building and institution is interesting, it is for its small picture-gallery of world-wide fame that the Hospital is chiefly sought. "To miss this," one writer has said, "is to have missed one of the chief glories of Bruges, and, indeed, of medieval art."

The peaceful courtyard of the Hospital, with its mellow buildings and lichened walls surrounding it, will appeal to all lovers of quietude and of the picturesque. On the last occasion of our visiting it a strange insistent touch of modernity was lent to it by the presence of a group of the nuns, doctors in their shirt sleeves, and a famous physician in a curly-brimmed silk hat and frock-coat, engaged in an

earnest consultation near the great flower-bed in the centre of the courtyard. The nuns with their picturesque and flapping white coifs were "in the picture," and struck no note of incongruity, but the doctors!—and especially he of the silk hat. One awoke from a vision of medievalism to a realization that this was the twentieth, and not the fifteenth century, and to a remembrance of the universality of sickness and pain.

Before entering the former Chapter House of the Hospital we took a glimpse of the Hospital itself. Through wide glazed doors we saw a vista of waving green trees, and sick and convalescent folk lying beneath them with the beautiful old-time terrace overhanging the canal not far beyond.

Here one has the opportunity of studying, amid surroundings which are singularly happy and appropriate, the exquisite art of Hans Memlinc, whose wonderful genius of miniature-painting and of poetry in pigments is here far better represented in its fulness and richness of accomplishment than anywhere else. It is interesting to remember, whilst looking at the pictures of this long-dead master of form and colour, that many of them were painted for the institution that still possesses them, and that, happily, one thus sees them undivorced from their natural surroundings.

Of Hans Memlinc, the man (whose name is variously written, as we have it, and also as Memling and Memlin), little is known, but the artist has his best and most enduring monument in his work.

Bruges has been celebrated for centuries as the home of a school of artists whose work (even when they themselves have been aliens to the city) is easily distinguishable by students and connoisseurs by reason of characteristic qualities of composition and colouring, and the importance of the backgrounds and peculiarities of framing which prevailed. The school has two chief epochs, the one prior to the Van Eycks, in which are to be placed many of the water-colour drawings found in the tombs at Bruges, Ste. Croix, and other neighbouring places, and upon the walls of St. Saveur and Notre Dame. In the Cathedral, we may mention in this connection, there is a peculiarly interesting panel dating from about 1400, on which is a representation of the Calvary with St. Catherine and St. Barbara. The artist was obviously influenced by the works of the Cologne school, and many



experts profess to see in this particular work a faint indication of the coming exquisite work of Hans Memlinc.

The art of the two Van Eycks commenced the second epoch of the Bruges school, and in its development the more conventional characteristics of previous painters—for example, diapered or gilt backgrounds—gradually disappeared, to give place to the more vital, picturesque scenes and landscape backgrounds. At the same time, aerial perspective, relying more for its effect upon the choice of colours and diversity of lighting than upon drawing, was introduced. Painting, in a word, became an art in itself, no longer, as formerly, largely dependent upon architecture. Of the two Van Eycks, John, although taught by his brother Hubert, exhibits the greater strength and realism, and it is to him that succeeding painters of Bruges owe most as regards influence. Of the more notable of his successors, Hans Memlinc, Gerard David, and others kept very much to his scale of colouring, and even in a measure to his style and rules of composition. During his life at the Hague, doubtless Jan Van Eyck influenced the noted painters of Haarlem. Hubert Van Eyck's methods and style were more followed by Peter Christus, a native of Baerle, in North Brabant, who, however, never attained to the strength of his master, and was more graceful, though less animated, in style than Jan Van Eyck, of whom, according to some authorities, he was a pupil.

The third Epoch covers the Renaissance period from about 1510-1660. Painters had commenced to feel the influence of the "humanists" and poets, and had become no longer mere painters, but artists. As one writer of distinction phrases it: "They had now become interpreters of contemporary literature, with its complicated and often abstruse allegories, and its emblems." Although the influence of Gerard David was still felt, that of Quentin Matsys, the painter of human feeling, and more particularly of human life, was exercising a great influence which tended to weaken the religious feeling.

Of the painters of the last Epoch we may mention John Provost, whose works from their dull colouring have a sombre effect; James Van Den Coornhuse; and Albert Cornelius; all of whom lived and worked during the period covered by the years 1500-1580. Lancelot Blondeel (whose

name has been mentioned several times already) is a very typical artist. He lived from about the middle of the last decade of the fifteenth century till 1561, and some of his work certainly suggests that he was influenced by that of Raphael, whilst in the decorative portions of his paintings one may find traces of the influence of German artists of his time. He was a distinguished architect and an engineer.

Of artists of the second period may be mentioned, Pieter Pourbus, or Poerbus (1540-84), the son-in-law of Lancelot Blondeel, who was born in Gelderland, but came to, and worked in, Bruges. His portraits comprise some of his best work, and in almost all his pictures one finds his especial qualities, richness of colouring, and cleverness of composition. An interesting feature of the pictures he left behind him is the unusually perfect state in which they remain, due, it is thought, to some special method of preservation, the secret of which he possessed. The work of François Pourbus, who was his contemporary, and lived from 1545-1581, is much like that of Peter, but inferior to it. Then came the Claeissens, of whom Pieter, the younger, who died in 1612, and Anthony, who died in the following year, both deserve some notice. They worthily carried on the traditions of local art.

There remain yet for consideration the Bruges artists of the Flemish school, who got to be known as Romanists by reason of their so often going to study the art of painting in Rome, thus becoming deeply influenced by the work of Italian masters. From that time the Bruges school became lost in the wider one known as the Flemish, the principal centre of whose efforts was Antwerp. This school came to its greatest fame and perfection in the person and works of Rubens. The native artists of the seventeenth century, whilst owing something to Italian influence, were yet more under the spell of the great native master. They, however, at the same time evinced a considerable degree of originality. Of these later painters, the two Van Oosts (1600-1713) are worth careful study. James Van Oost the elder undoubtedly often copied Rubens, but he was endowed with a great original gift for brilliant composition, and many of his works are distinguished for an absence of the exaggerated foreshortening, and often theatrical style of posing affected by many of his contemporaries. The portraits of his son are distinguished, and sometimes of a Van Dyck-like character.

Belonging also to about this period were Ghislain Vroilync, Gerard Seghers of Antwerp (1591-1651), Louis and Anna De Deyster (1670-1747), and the two Reeregoudts, father and son (1633-1724), all painters of some note.

Bruges has also produced several painters of the French school. Of them, Garemyn (1712-1799), though, or perhaps we should say because, working in an era of artistic and almost universal decay, is probably the greatest. His work is distinguished by easy pencilling, bright colouring, and rich composition, and although known to comparatively few save connoisseurs outside his own town, is of such merit as to challenge comparison with some of the best work of Boucher; Suvee, who was director of the French Academy in Rome (1743-1807); Ducq (1762-1829); and Kinsoen, the well-known portrait-painter (1770-1839), may be mentioned as outstanding examples, though by no means exhausting the list of distinguished Bruges artists of the various epochs with which we have thus briefly dealt.

To return, however, to Hans Memlinc and the *Hôpital de St. Jean*. Referring to Mr. Weale, we find that the artist whose chief works are enshrined in the old-world hospital was probably born in Germany\* about the year 1430, and is generally thought to have been a pupil of Roger Van Der Weyden, of Brussels. He was, at the time of his coming to Bruges, about 1478, a man of considerable wealth. He died in 1495, and thus his period of active work coincides very nearly with that of the earlier works of Carpaccio and Perugino in Italy. He was born some ten years before the death of Jan Van Eyck, and was younger by thirty years than his master Van De Weyden, and the senior of Gerard David by almost as much. Memlinc's claim to be considered the Fra Angelico of Flanders can only rest upon his resemblance to the panel work of the latter. When Fra Angelico worked in fresco his method and style were entirely different from that of Memlinc.

As is well known, the best of all Memlinc's work is that adorning the wonderful *chasse* or shrine made to contain the relic or holy arm of St. Ursula. It was this *chasse* that the Hospital authorities commissioned of Memlinc in 1480-1489.

The story of St. Ursula is briefly as follows. She is supposed to have been a British princess brought up in the

\* Possibly at Mayence.—C. H.



Christian faith, and in due time to have been sought in marriage by a pagan prince called Conon, who was supposed to be a son of Agrippinus, an English king. This King, so the legend goes, sent ambassadors to the father of Ursula, who was a King of Britain or Brittany, with a request for the hand of his daughter in marriage with his heir. Ursula, however, before consenting made three conditions. The first was that she should be given as companions ten noble virgins, and that she and each of the latter should be accompanied by a thousand maidens as attendants. The second condition was that they should all of them visit the shrines of the saints. The third that the prince she was to wed should with his court be baptized into the Christian faith.

In compliance with these conditions, we are told, Agrippinus collected the 11,000 virgins. Ursula and her companions set sail for Cologne, which she reached miraculously without any sailors to man the ship, although it is seen that Memlinc in his painting has put some in. Whilst at Cologne, Ursula had a vision telling her to go to Rome. Obedient to this, she voyaged up the Rhine as far as Basle, where she landed and continued the journey on foot over the Alps. On nearing Rome by way of the Tiber, the then Pope, St. Cyriacus, went out to meet her, accompanied by all his clergy. After having blessed Ursula and her maidens he conducted them to an encampment on the Tivoli side of the city, where he had had tents pitched for their accommodation lest they should come to harm in Rome itself, which at that period did not enjoy a very high reputation for morals. By a miraculous chance Prince Conon himself, travelling by a different route, arrived at Rome on the same day as his future wife. He was later on baptized by St. Cyriacus in the name of Ethereus.

After a short time, Ursula and her maidens began to be-think them of returning home, and upon conveying their intention to the Pope he decided (such was doubtless the attraction of this army of 11,000 maidens) to accompany them with his cardinals, archbishops, bishops and other prelates. This unique party ultimately set forth, and, crossing the Alps, reached Basle, and from thence proceeded down the Rhine in boats to Cologne.

It so happened that the Huns, who were overrunning Central Europe at the time, were engaged in besieging the Roman colony at Cologne, and they promptly fell upon the

army of virgins and their ecclesiastical fellow-travellers. The betrothed husband of St. Ursula, the Prince Ethereus, was the first to be slain; and after him all the ecclesiastics, including the Pope himself, fell. The 11,000 virgins were then slaughtered, only St. Ursula herself being saved. She was taken before the Hunnish leader, who offered to spare her if she would wed him. This the saint refused to do, whereupon the King of the Huns seized his bow and shot her thrice in the breast with arrows. It is for this reason that Ursula's emblem is an arrow. This saint is the patroness of maidenhood and virgins, and thus it is appropriate that her shrine should be connected with a nunnery.

The *chasse*, or shrine, of St. Ursula is fashioned in the form of a miniature Gothic chapel. This is placed in the centre of the room in which these art treasures are found. There is no space at our command for detailed description, much less for criticism or examination, of these wonderful masterpieces in miniature. Those of our readers who have read their Conway will not need this; those to whom Conway's admirable volume is unfamiliar cannot do better than become acquainted with it, or with some smaller handbook dealing with the artist and his work.\* It will be easy for anyone to follow the story of the life, journeys, and martyrdom of the Saint and her companions from the brief summary of the legendary tale which we have just given. Concerning the astounding beauty and charm of Memlinc's exquisite and truly poetical work there can be no two opinions. He has vested this series of pictures with all the glamour of a poetical medieval romance. As a literalist—in the sense that he was a master of most accurate historical detail—he also appeals to the student, whether the latter be one of archæology, costume, or manners. His general accuracy is admitted, and, though the relative positions of buildings may have been altered, one can accept Memlinc's representation of them as correct.

In the first panel on the left St. Ursula and her maidens are seen arriving at Cologne, attired in the rich and graceful dress of the fifteenth-century Burgundian Court. In the second panel they are seen disembarking at Basle from the ships. Here it is that Memlinc (possibly not accepting the

\* "Memlinc," by W. H. J. and J. C. Weale ("Masterpieces in Colour" Series).

legend of the miraculous voyage of these 11,000 maidens in sailorless ships) introduces the figures of "shipmen" of the period. In the third panel (which by many authorities, and most other folk, we fancy, is considered the most beautiful) the Saint and her companions are seen arriving at Rome, and entering the Eternal City through a distant triumphal arch.

On the first panel at the other side of the *chasse*, commencing on the left, one sees the Pope and his companion ecclesiastics (who have accompanied St. Ursula and her maidens) embarking at Basle for their journey to Cologne. There are three episodes depicted here connected together—the Pope stepping with obvious caution into the ship, the same seated, and the ship on its way down the Rhine. The faces of most of the figures are wonderful examples of Memlinc's miniature portrait-painting, and were, no doubt, excellent "likenesses" of the models who sat for them, or the persons the artist had in mind.

The second panel shows the arrival of the Pope and his companions, and Ursula and her maidens, at Cologne, where they are at once attacked by the Huns.

The third panel is a continuation of the subject of the last. The King of the Huns, a figure in full armour, is seen at his tent door, bending his bow to shoot St. Ursula, who has refused to wed him. Gathered around the Hunnish leader are knights, also in armour, most skilfully painted.

The two ends of the famous *chasse* contains panels. One shows St. Ursula, with her emblem, the arrow, posing in her character of protectress of young girls, and sheltering a number of them under her cloak. At the other end of the shrine is a painting of the Virgin and Child, holding an apple, whilst two nuns of the Order of St. Augustine are seen kneeling.

The pictorial decorations of the roof of the *chasse* consist of a painting of St. Ursula receiving her crown of martyrdom; and at the two sides of the group, which included the figures of the Holy Trinity, are seen two angels, one playing a mandoline and the other a portable organ of the period. The other picture represents St. Ursula in Paradise, surrounded by her maidens, together with the Pope and the other martyred ecclesiastics in the background. It should be noted that this last painting owes a good deal of its "inspiration" to the famous work by Stephan Lochner on



the high altar in the Cathedral at Cologne. At the side of this are two more angels playing upon a violin and zither.

Such, then, is a brief description of the most wonderful pictures, not alone in this city of Bruges, but in all Flanders. To give any adequate impression of their exquisite colouring, charm of composition, and entrancing interest, is impossible in print. Hours may be spent in their study by the student without their astonishing genius and charm palling, yet those who can give but a few moments to their viewing cannot fail to go away conscious of having seen, however imperfectly, some of the greatest masterpieces of art dating from the end of the Middle Ages.

The famous triptych of Memlinc, painted at the behest of Jan Floreins, a Brother, and the Master, of the Hospital in 1479, is placed near the window close to the entrance door of the room. The central panel represents the Adoration of the Magi, which event is depicted as taking place in a ruined temple which has been turned into a manger. On the left of the picture are figures of the donor, Jan Floreins, and his brother Jacob; whilst on the other side of the picture is seen a monkish-looking figure peering in through a window, and wearing the yellow cap which, it is interesting to note, is still worn by the convalescents of the hospital. By some authorities this is said to be a portrait of Memlinc himself.

The left panel of the triptych has for its subject the Nativity, with the Virgin, St. Joseph, and two adoring angels. The right-hand panel depicts the Presentation of the Holy Child in the Temple, with Simeon, Anna, and St. Joseph dressed in red in the background. The outside panels have the figures of St. John the Baptist with the Lamb, and St. Veronica, showing the miraculous impression of the Divine countenance upon her napkin. The architectural frame has a representation of the First Sin and Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise.

The portraits of this wonderful altar-piece, which is Memlinc's masterpiece of this kind, are extraordinarily full of character, and the backgrounds of landscape or buildings of wonderful minuteness and charm.

The authenticity of the triptych near the centre window of the room is doubted by some, though it is popularly attributed to Memlinc, and is accepted as his work by most

judges. The scene is the Descent from the Cross, with the figures of the Madonna, St. John, and St. Mary Magdalene in the foreground, whilst in the background are to be observed the preparations for the entombment. This painting, which dates from the year 1480, has, unfortunately, been much injured, and appears to have originally lacked the perfect finish which one looks for in this artist's work.

At the end of the room, at the time of our visit, was placed the largest of Memlinc's works, a triptych for the high altar of the Hospital Church. It is meant to glorify the two saints, John the Evangelist and John the Baptist, and to typify the two kinds of life, the active and the contemplative, represented by St. Catherine and St. Barbara respectively. The painting was the gift of Jan Floreins, who is represented in the background in his secular capacity of a public tester of wine. On the backgrounds and wings are depicted scenes from the lives of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist. Some of these, especially those above the figure of the Evangelist, are lacking in poetical imagery, and fall far below the painter's usual standard of artistic performance. The exterior wings are occupied by portraits of others of the donors—viz., Ant. Zeghers, master of the Hospital; Jacob de Cueninc, the treasurer; Agnes Casembrood, mistress of the Hospital; and Claire Van Hulsen, one of the Sisters. All of them with their patron saints.

Though in composition, drawing, and colouring the painting is a wonderful work, as a whole, it is not so perfect as regards conception as most of Memlinc's other masterpieces. One of the most interesting paintings in the background is the view of the commercial life of Bruges of the artist's time.

The other Memlincs here are a portrait of Marie Moreel (depicted as the Sambetha Sibyl), who was the daughter of Willem Moreel, one of the artist's patrons. It is a fine, solidly-painted work, now much spoiled by the perishing of the glazing. Like most portraits of women of the period, the face is "wooden" in expression. Even that of the Madonna herself in medieval pictures suffers from this failing, which may possibly have arisen from the fact that the early painters undoubtedly copied their faces of her from carved wooden figures, and the type seems to have become conventionally "fixed" and perpetuated. The faces of the

men, especially of the older ones, in most pictures of the age are generally far better. The artists of the Middle Ages, it is clear, were much more interested in portraying facial character than mere facial beauty.

On the same stand as the "Deposition from the Cross" at the time of our last visit, was Memlinc's beautiful diptych of Martin Van Nieuwenhoven adoring the Virgin Mary. The right-hand panel is interesting from the fact that it has for its subject the finely-painted portrait of the donor, Nieuwenhoven, in a brown velvet suit. The hands are joined together, in the conventional attitude of devotion, above an open Prayer-Book. The background is formed by windows, the upper portion of one of which contains stained glass, depicting the donor's patron saint, St. Martin. The "light" is open to disclose a charming view, such as Memlinc delighted in painting. This picture, which dates from 1487, once belonged to the Hospice of St. Julian, a half-secular, half-religious institution of the town, of which Van Nieuwenhoven was one of the two patrons. To see the remaining, and seventh, of Memlinc's works, one must visit the *Musée de l'Académie*.



## CHAPTER XII

### SOME ANCIENT BUILDINGS, AND SOME KNOWN AND LESS KNOWN HAUNTS IN BRUGES

**R**ICH in all that appertains to art, Bruges is well endowed with fine and interesting churches, themselves the repositories of much historical data and of many fine pictures. Unhappily, the ancient Cathedral of St. Donatian—to which reference has already been made—was destroyed by the French during the Wars of the Revolution.

It was whilst kneeling before the Lady altar of this church that Charles the Good, during the celebration of Mass on March 1, was slain by the sword of Burchard, who, with some of his retainers, had crept unobserved into the church; and outside of it, later on, that the Erembalds were to make their last gallant stand for their lives and their liberties.

Tradition asserts that after the destruction of the Cathedra by the French, the stones of which it was built found their way into all parts of Flanders. Some, so the story goes, were used by the builders of the château which lies on the high road to Thouront, about three miles distant from Bruges, between the villages of Steenbrugge and Lophem. If one asks the peasants anything concerning this beautifully situate residence, they shake their heads and repeat the legend of its building, and declare with emphasis bred of conviction that “no one has prospered who has lived beneath its roof. There is a curse upon it.”

Fortunately, however, for the city, for students of architecture, and for the lovers of ancient and beautiful ecclesiastical buildings, Bruges still possesses two churches of great charm and interest, as well as several of lesser note and importance. The two great churches of St. Sauveur and

Notre Dame both date from the most flourishing period of the town's history—that is to say, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. The former, which stands in the cemetery of St. Sauveur, is easily reached either from the Grande Place by way of the Rue des Pierres, or from the *Gare Centrale* by way of the Rue Sud du Sablon. The fine and impressive building has only ranked as a Cathedral since 1834, though it is of very ancient foundation. The original church, erected by St. Eloi or St. Eligius in 646, was ultimately—somewhere about the middle of the twelfth century—destroyed by fire, and the present building in the Early Gothic Style was erected in its place.

The chief characteristic which will strike the student on the first view of St. Sauveur's is the shortness of the nave. It is possible that this is chiefly owing to the desire on the part of the rebuilders to retain as a feature of the church the Romanesque and solid-looking western tower of the more ancient building. This portion was burned five years after the church had been chosen to contain the throne of the bishop, and a few years later Chantrell designed the uppermost portion of the present-day structure. The church is almost entirely constructed of brick. It is more imposing than might be assumed from that fact, and consists of the western tower referred to, a nave of four bays, transepts having chapels on their eastern sides, and a choir with four bays which terminate in a five-sided apse.

Upon entering the building, one is at once struck by the great height and spaciousness of the nave, which features confer upon it a dignity and importance. The church is not only particularly "well-furnished" with examples of Gothic and Renaissance work, but possesses a number of good and interesting pictures by native and other Belgian artists. Unfortunately, the fine tracery of the windows on the south side of the nave has been destroyed. There is a curious high-pointed triforium dating from the middle of the fourteenth century, between the arches of the nave and the windows of the clerestory, which is worth attention.

The choir is shut off from the nave by a rood screen dating from 1682, constructed of vari-coloured marble in the debased Renaissance or rococo style. Above the central arch is a colossal statue of the Deity by Artus Quellin the younger.

Although the general effect of the architecture of both the nave and transept is rather severe it is softened by the really beautiful work (1183-1223) found in the first bays of the choir. The organ, placed above the screen, has a finely-carved case dating from about the middle of the seventeenth century. Through the grilles and gates which are in the inner faces of the three arches of the screen one can obtain delightful vistas of the beautiful choir.

The stalls in the first two bays are interesting and fine examples of early fifteenth-century work, well worth attentive study. And, though they are not canopied, are greatly enriched by tracery of the Decorated Period between the two arches, one of which is round and the other obtuse-headed. The under sides of the choir seats are carved with an amazing variety of subjects. They should be turned up and studied if the opportunity offers.

The church, it should be noted, has been whitewashed several times. But Canon Leuridan in 1871 commenced cleaning this off, and afterwards had the whole church renovated and decorated afresh by Baron Bethune d'Ydewalle, and A. Verheagen in 1874-1875. For most people's taste the effect of the many colours used is too gaudy and flamboyant.

The five eastern chapels are remarkable chiefly for their size; they were the last portion of the Cathedral originally built, and date from about the year 1527.

The left chapel of the transept, known as the *Chapelle des Cordonniers* (Chapel of the Shoemakers' Guild) contains some fine fifteenth-century woodcarving, and several good fourteenth and fifteenth century brasses, notably those of Martin de Visch (1452), Walter Voopman (1387), and the Schelewaerts (1483).

The Cathedral, though containing few works of art of the highest merit, yet possesses many of interest. Among the best and most thought of may be mentioned that masterpiece of Peter Pourbus, of Gouda, the triptych painted for the Guild of the Holy Sacrament which was connected with the church. On the back of the outer wings is a representation of the Miraculous Mass of St. Gregory, the legend regarding which tells us, that after the saint had consecrated the Host it was changed into the bodily presence of the Lord so that the scepticism of a doubter might be dissipated. The subject is one particularly applicable to a work painted for



the Guild, which was founded in honour of the belief in actual Transubstantiation. On the right wing the Brothers of the Confraternity are seen in attendance upon the Pope, and as spectators of the miracle. These portraits, which are particularly good, are additionally interesting as showing the last stage in the evolution of native Flemish art before Rubens had revolutionized it. The inner picture has for its subject the Last Supper, and it will be noted that the figures of the Disciples are ranged round three sides of a table in conventional order; Judas occupying a position in the left of the foreground. The inner wings have as subjects Melchisidec giving bread and wine to Abraham; and Elijah being fed by the Angel in the Wilderness.

On the left wall of the Baptistry is a portion (two wings) of a quaint triptych representing St. Mary Magdalene with the pot of precious ointment; St. Barbara and her tower; St. Martin dividing his cloak with the beggar; and St. Nicholas raising to life the three boys who had been salted down for meat. The quaint ciborium for holding the Holy Oil, on which are reliefs of the Seven Joys of Mary, dating from about 1536, should not be overlooked.

In the Third Chapel of the Ambulatory is the fine Renaissance alabaster tomb of Archbishop Carondelet, dating from the middle of the sixteenth century. In this chapel is also the much-discussed triptych, now believed to be by Dierick Bouts of Louvain (for long attributed incorrectly to Hans Memlinc), the centre picture of which is St. Hippolytus in the act of being torn to piece by four horses. The same saint confessing himself of the Christian faith, and condemned to be martyred, occupies the right wing, whilst the left contains portraits of the donors. The faces in this work of the painter (who rose from the people) show wonderful grasp of portraiture, which may have had not a little to do with the erroneous attributing of the pictures to Memlinc.

James Van Oost the elder's "Annunciation and Descent of the Holy Ghost," dating from 1658, which is on the north side of the church, should not be missed by those interested in the Flemish school of painters. It is rendered additionally interesting from the fact that on the middle panel appear portraits of the artist and his son.

Among the other art treasures of the church we have only space to mention is a picture painted on a wood panel,



A BRUGES QUAY AND VIEW OF BELFRY





and protected by a shutter depending from curious and ancient hinges. It depicts the Crucifixion, St. Barbara, and St. Catherine. It dates from about 1390, and is of very great interest. The draperies appear to have been done in oil-colour, unless (which many connoisseurs believe) they were subsequently painted over or restored. The picture is a typical example of the old Bruges school of painting prior to the era of the Van Eycks.

In the north transept and elsewhere in the church are to be seen the great canvases of Jan Van Orley, painted in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. They were originally in St. Donatian's, and from them the famous tapestries, which adorn the choir on great occasions, were woven.

In the fifth apsidal chapel is an interesting stained-glass window by Jules Dobbelaere, representing the first missionaries to Flanders.

On the south side wall of the transept are several notable works, amongst them the "Christ Crucified on Calvary," and other scenes from the Passion, by an unknown master, date about the commencement of the fifteenth century. These were for a long period attributed to Gerard Van Der Meire. "The Resurrection," by Peter Claeissens the younger, 1585: "The Institution of the Blessed Rosary," by Nicolas Liemakere (1575-1646); and "Christ Triumphant over Death and Hell," from the brush of J. Van Oost the elder.

In the first chapel of the ambulatory will be found a most interesting painted crucifix on the altar, the oldest Renaissance work of art in Bruges. In the churchwardens' vestry, or *Chambre des Marguilliers*, at the western end of the south aisle, is a leaden slab of especial interest to English people, coming as it did from the tomb of St. Gunhilde (1087), the sister of Harold, last King of the Saxons, who died at Bruges. The ivory pastoral staff of St. Maclou, who died about 565, and some ancient missals, are also worthy of study.

The silver shrine of St. Donatian dates only from the seventeenth century, it having been made from a much older one of (probably) thirteenth-century work. The statuette of the angel, with enamelled wings, the two pricked figures of saints, the Madonna, and some of the precious stones, filigree-work, and flowers, belonged to this ancient casket. The large silver shrine of St. Eloi is the work of the same

artist—J. Crabbe—who made that of the Holy Blood. It dates from 1612.

It is but a couple of hundred yards or so through the quaint and tree-shadowed cemetery, and along the Rue St. Esprit, to the other chief church of Bruges, Notre Dame, whose beautiful spire seems to follow one in one's peregrinations of the quaint and narrow streets of the neighbourhood whenever a clear skyline and a little space is obtained. Founded, it is generally believed, by St. Boniface, an Englishman, formerly called Winfrid, as early as 745, it is chiefly interesting to the student as comprising, in its vast and somewhat irregular structure, fragments of almost all known periods of architecture. It was upon the site of Winfrid's ancient chapel that, in about 880, the existing structure was commenced.

Destroyed almost entirely by fire in 1116, it was largely owing to the initiative and munificence of the Bishop, Charles the Good, that four or five years later it was rebuilt. Some remains of this twelfth-century church still exist, mainly in the north aisle of the nave, but by far the greater part of the present building was in course of erection during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The tower dates from about 1297, the spire being added in 1320.

The rebuilding of the side aisles and choir, it is generally believed, was carried out under the direction of architects of the Tournai school, and the work, though differing in style, is well-conceived and pleasing in character. Originally the western front possessed two round turrets, decorated with small columns, and a triple "lancet," with a gallery running above it. The large window of the present-day structure dates only from the end of the fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century.

The plan of the church, from the fact that work of so many periods has been incorporated in the fabric, is an unusually irregular one, and it is largely owing to this that the building, seen either from without or within, has an undeniable charm, or picturesqueness, for the unlearned, and a deep interest for the architect and student.

Neither the nave nor choir are intersected by a transept, and to them there are eleven bays, the sixth of which is considerably wider than its fellows, and serves to divide the nave and choir into two equal portions. It is flanked on the

north by the tower. A three-sided apse forms the termination of the choir, and another and corresponding apse opens from the middle of the ambulatory formed by the continuation of the choir aisles, the bays and eastern ends of which form a triangle. In the first four bays of the north aisle of the nave one finds Romanesque arcades, which are relics of the earlier church. These open into a narrow aisle, and between this and a much wider one, with a continuation into an apsidal chapel, is the tower, with the baptistery on its north side.

There is a beautiful portico under the tower, called in Flemish *Het Paradijs*, dating from the second half of the fifteenth century, now converted into a baptistery. It is, unhappily, much defaced.

The tower itself, as regards its lower or quadrangular portion, dates from 1297, and the spire, commenced in the same year, was completed in 1320. The whole structure is 395 feet in height from the pavement. The masonry of the spire has on more than one occasion been injured by lightning, and in 1818 the upper structure was lowered no less than 50 feet in the work of reconstruction which had been rendered necessary from various causes. The one curious feature which speedily strikes even the casual observer is the use of red brick for the restoration of the spire, whilst the lower portion of the fabric is of yellow. The critic of architecture will probably agree with us that the style of both the open-work crown of blue stone and the ornamental crockets are not in the best taste.

As a whole the interior of the church has suffered much. From the sixteenth century onwards, it has been the "sport of chance and the victim of ill-advised attentions" on the part of "restorers" and others. It has more than once received disfiguring coats of whitewash—the first of which was applied in 1589—and the last just three hundred years later. The latter will be entirely removed during the course of the restoration now in progress. Unfortunately, the beautiful triforium was pulled down, and in its place the present-day ugly arcades were erected. But on the whole the new work of restoration, which was commenced a few years ago by M. Charles Wulf, is careful and well-advised, and it is pleasant to think that ere long the old triforium



will be restored partly by the aid of original materials discovered at the back of the arcades.

Amongst the art and other treasures of this church none is more interesting or more beautiful than the Virgin and Child of Michael Angelo, which is placed in a black marble niche in a chapel formed by shutting off of the end of the outer south aisle, by means of the beautiful marble balustrade by Louis Jehotte. The figures are life size, and they were sculptured in 1511, very soon after the celebrated group in St. Peter's, Rome. It is thought that this Bruges Madonna and Child is identical with that commissioned by a merchant of the city called Jan Mouscron, and described by Condivi and Vasari, incorrectly, as being of bronze. It is interesting to remember that the life-size original study for the Virgin's head is now in the South Kensington Museum. All will admire the beautiful and gracious lines and roundness of the two figures, qualities distinctive of this master's earlier works. No wonder Bruges rejected Horace Walpole's offer of 30,000 florins for this exquisite work.\*

In a closed chapel to the right in the ambulatory are the tombs of Charles the Bold, who died in 1477, and of Mary of Burgundy, his daughter, who died in 1482, and was the wife of the Emperor Maximilian, the last members of the House of Burgundy and of the native princes of the South Netherlands. Formerly, and prior to the French Revolutionary occupation of the country, these tombs stood in the choir. Though both are beautiful works of art of their kind, with life-size recumbent figures, that of Mary is of the greater artistic merit. The figures are of copper, richly gilded, and they are seen reclining upon marble sarcophagi, on the sides of which are enamelled the armorial bearings of the duchies, counties, and baronies of Burgundy. The tomb of Charles is of much later date than that of his daughter. It was erected and completed (like that of Maximilian in the Church of the Franciscans at Innsbruck, Tyrol) in the year 1559, some considerable time after his death, at the instance of Philippe II., one of his descendants. On the tomb is the Duke's motto, "*Je l'ay empris, bien en aviengne*" ("I have ventured, may it prosper"). The tomb is the work of Johg he-

\* Some authorities incline to the view that the actual carving was not the work of the master, but of one of his favourite pupils.

linck of Antwerp, and cost (so tradition states) the then immense sum of 24,395 florins.

The tomb of the Princess, who, it will be remembered, was killed at the early age of twenty-five by a fall from her horse whilst hunting with her husband near Bruges, is of great beauty and magnificence. It was designed and made by Peter Beckere of Brussels by order of her son, Philippe le Beau. It is in the Gothic Style—or rather, perhaps, may it be said to be in that which came between the later period of the Middle Ages and the completeness of the Renaissance—and it took the artist seven years to complete. After the Battle of Nancy on January 5, 1477, the body of Charles the Bold was brought to the Church of St. Donatian by his successor, Charles V., and was finally transported to Notre Dame by Philippe le Beau, and laid beside that of his daughter.

Originally, this particular chapel was dedicated to Peter Lanchals, the friend of Maximilian, who was wrongly accused of an intention to deliver the city over to the Germans and destruction. By the irony of fate the unfortunate man, whose name signifies “long neck,” and whose family crest is a swan, was delivered over to torture by an instrument which he had himself invented. This, we are told, was an invention more cruel than any other ever before known in Flanders. The night of his arrest, after he had long been a fugitive, the citizens greeted his progress to the Steen with howls of contempt, derision, and hatred, which were kept up outside his prison all night long. The Brugnois were mad with joy at the capture of their supposed enemy, cannon were discharged, bands of music paraded the chief streets and squares of the city, and the inhabitants indulged in a wild orgy of dancing and riotous feasting throughout the night. In this scene, in which, we are told, “many, both women and men, were so filled with wine that they lay in the streets all night,” one catches a vivid, if but a transient, glimpse of the fierce hates and joys of the Middle Ages. Lanchals was executed on the morrow. To the last he clung fiercely to life, entreating his enemies to throw him into a dungeon, however dark and foul, so long as they let him live.

One of not the least picturesque features of the canals of Bruges are the swans, which sail calmly and gracefully along their tideless waters. They are the descendants of the birds

which, when Maximilian (who was imprisoned at the time of Lanchals's death) once more regained his liberty, he gave to the city, and bade the latter to maintain for all time as a perpetual reminder of Lanchals's death.

On one of the walls of this same chapel is the Last Supper of Pieter Pourbus, of Gouda; and also a fine enamelled and engraved brass of the middle of the sixteenth century, to Josse de Damhoudere and his wife.

The pulpit of Notre Dame is of unusual beauty and charm, not alone on account of the fine workmanship of the carving, but by reason of the sentiment or spirit which permeates it. It is known as the *chaire de vérité*. Religion (or Wisdom) is seen seated on the terrestrial globe with an open Bible upon her knees, whilst before this figure an angel is seen kneeling in the act of prayer. The figures are beautifully sculptured, and deserve careful inspection. Of the many Belgian examples of carved wooded *chaires* with which we have become familiar in our wanderings in this land of elaborate pulpits, few appear to us so instinct with the spirit of reverence and unostentatious beauty as that under notice.

In the Chapel of the Holy Cross, which dates from 1473, are a series of interesting if not important pictures relating to the relic of the Holy Cross, which was presented to the Church of Notre Dame, in the year mentioned, by Walter Ootenhove. The pictures are the work of Peter de Brune, and were painted in 1632-1634. There is also an interesting crucifix of the end of the fifteenth century.

The first chapel of the ambulatory, formerly called that of the Holy Trinity, contains four interesting high reliefs of the sixteenth century, which were restored and repainted in 1874. They were badly injured by the fanaticism of the *Gueux* in 1579. There are several paintings of note among them, "Christ at Emmaus" generally ascribed (although there appears little actual evidence) to Carravaggio, and "The Vocation of St. Matthew" of Jacob Van Oost the elder, dating from 1640.

On the left hand, at the entrance to the apse, is "The Adoration of the Shepherds," by Pieter Pourbus the younger. It is a winged picture, and is generally kept closed. On the left wing are seen the donor, Josse de Damhoudere, his patron saint and his four sons. On the right wing are depicted Damhoudere's wife Louise, her patron saint,



St. Louis of France, wearing a robe sprinkled with fleurs-de-lis, and a crown, and Louis Damhoudere's four daughters. On the outer wings are the Circumcision, and the Adoration of the Magi in grisaille. The inner central panel has for its subject the Adoration of the Shepherds.

Near by is a finely-carved Gothic pew, belonging to the Van Der Gruthuise family, and formerly connected by a passage with the family mansion hard by.

In the churchwardens' vestry there is an historical collection of portraits of nearly all the provosts of the chapter; and a very interesting interior view of the church, dating from 1670, which has been found valuable in assisting the work of restoration on original lines.

The baptistery in the last bay on the outer left aisle should not be missed. In former times the porch, this gem of Late fourteenth-century Gothic, is beautiful exteriorly and charming interiorly, and in it is an interesting font.

Seen in sharp contrast with the severe and towering mass, against which this architectural gem appears as though sheltering itself, it has added delicacy and charm, and forms one of the most delightful pieces of architecture (perhaps to the ordinary observer the most delightful) in the whole building.

On the west wall of the church will be found several pictures, which are worth inspection by those who have time at their disposal; though few—save Segher's great picture, the "Adoration of the Magi," and Gaspar de Crayer's "Adoration of the Infant Christ"—are either by well-known artists or of any great value.

The remaining church in Bruges which calls for notice of any extended character is that of St. Jacques, a large and lofty building, situate in the west-central part of the city and most pleasantly reached from the station by way of the Quais, or along the clean and interesting Rue Nord du Sablon and Rue de la Monnaie, which leads into the Rue St. Jacques on the left. In this church, founded about the end of the twelfth century, there are many remains of good Middle Pointed detail to be picked out on the exterior of the building, whilst in the northern portion are traces of the original sandstone work. But as a whole the building has at various times suffered greatly, firstly, at the hands of the iconoclasts, and afterwards at those of a succession of clumsy and taste-

less innovators and would-be restorers. The plan includes a nave and choir with wide aisles. The transepts are short, and the northern one projects from the rather fine and impressive brick tower, the lower part of which, the transept (now the Chapel of All Souls), and the north nave, all date from the middle half of the thirteenth century. The apse of the nave just mentioned is the original choir of the church, and should be studied. There is a curious cornice on the outside. What with the depredations of the *Gueux* in the sixteenth century, who destroyed the beautiful fifteenth-century altar, the exquisite rood loft in grey stone, the stalls, and the stained glass windows, with the patch-work of restorers at various periods, there is little in the present-day building as regards its architecture to detain either the architect or student. There are, however, a few pictures in the church worth study. The reredos, which is in three compartments, depicts the legend of St. Lucy of Syracuse; and is chiefly interesting from the fact that in the background is to be seen the tower and church of St. Jacques, as it was at the time the picture was painted. The figures are not well-proportioned, but the unknown, mid-fifteenth century artist was by no means a poor craftsman.

A triptych (also at the western end of the north side of the church) is attributed to a Master of the Holy Blood, who appears to have been a pupil or follower of Gerard David.

In the south chapel there is a fine work by Anton Claeisens, dating from 1590, the subject of which is the Worship of the Holy Eucharist; and an interesting seventeenth-century Adoration of the Magi.

The Chantry of Ferry de Gros, a Treasurer of the Order of the Golden Fleece, was erected in the early part of the sixteenth century (probably at the very commencement), his father, John de Gros, having in 1476 ordered the erection of the south chapel. Part of the pavement of the chantry is the original, and the altar is ancient. The tomb of Ferry de Gros and his two wives is a fine one, and forms a good example of early Renaissance workmanship. On the altar of this chapel is one of the chief treasures of the church, a majolica or enamelled terra-cotta low relief of the Virgin and Child in a fifteenth-century frame, surmounted by a

wreath of fruit. The work is variously ascribed to Andrea della Robbia and Luca.

The Chapel of Our Lady of Angels contains a good altarpiece, one of the best works of J. Van Oost the elder. The subject is the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin.

There are several other pictures we noted worth careful study by those really interested in the development of Flemish art. Among them a Holy Family, by J. Van Oost; a triptych, by Pieter Pourbus, of the Blessed Virgin surrounded by her Seven Sorrows; and the ancient altarpiece, once in the Chapel of Our Lady of Angels, showing the coronation of the Virgin, by Albert Cornelis, dating from 1517. There is a very large reredos in three compartments by Lancelot Blondeel, 1523, commissioned by the Guild of Barber-Surgeons. It depicts scenes from the legend of St. Cosmas and St. Damian, the patron saints of the Guild. Though it is supposed to rank high among the authenticated works of the artist, it is not impressive nor satisfying.

There is also a good triptych supposed to be by Jan Mostart, the subject of which is the prophecies concerning Christ's Coming. It is worth attention as a good example of Flemish art of the period, and exhibiting the ideas of the Middle Ages concerning these prophecies.

The pulpit is seventeenth-century, ornate and not in good taste; and the marble rood screen is garish and commonplace.

In the immediate neighbourhood of the church the observant wanderer in the highways and byways will come across some excellent and most picturesque specimens of old-time houses. Several in the Rue du Marécage, No. 28 in particular, and others at the corner of the Rue St. Jacques. The Goldsmiths' Tribune on the Pont Flamand; and the beautiful old buildings in the Rue Queue de Vache (now Rue Pourbus), No. 7 especially, are also worth seeing.

North-eastward from this district lies the *Hospice de la Poterie*, now an asylum or almshouses for old women, which should certainly be visited. It is picturesquely situated on the banks of the Reye, and is of so ancient a foundation that the present building, dating from about 1276, is supposed to have replaced an even earlier one. The first chapel dates from the end of the thirteenth century, and the present church



—the three gables of which date from different periods, namely, central gable (about) 1354, left 1529, right 1523—was first built about 1345. Though the church is of very simple design it forms an elegant and interesting example of architecture of the time.

In the south chapel is the miraculous image of Our Lady of the Pottery standing upon the altar, dating from the thirteenth century. Next to this chapel, placed on a bracket, is the votive statue of Our Lady, the legend in connection with which is that it was given in consequence of a vow made by the women of Bruges at the beginning of the fourteenth century, when the citizens were at war with Philippe le Bel. They promised, if success crowned their husbands' arms, that they would each year give a wax candle, weighing not less than thirty-six pounds, to Our Lady of the Pottery. In fulfilment of this vow, after the great victory of Mons-en-Pève on August 18, 1304, the first candle was given; and ever since, with the exception of the period when the French Republican forces overran the country, and afterwards for about twenty years, the vow has been kept. Each year on the anniversary of the battle since 1839, when the event was reinstituted, a procession starts from the chapel of *Notre Dame des Aveugles* on a pilgrimage to the *Poterie*.

Some hours could be easily spent in this chapel, and the various rooms of the adjoining buildings, in the inspection of the religious relics—such as that of the Holy Thorn, and the fine reliquary monstrance of the fifteenth century in the vestry; the treasures of the Museum, including a medieval rattle, which had to be sounded by a leper on his way through the streets as a warning of his approach; low reliefs of the fourteenth century, and a chest of local workmanship dating from the commencement of the sixteenth century, which bears the motto of Charles V.

The pictures include good examples of Jan Claeissens' "Christ with Four of His Apostles meeting Ten Lepers"; a triptych, by Pieter Claeissens, of the Madonna; an arched triptych attributed to Pieter Pourbus ("Christ on the Cross"), and many others. To the treasures of tapestry, ancient furniture (in the Dining-Room and other parts of the Hospital), there is no space to refer in detail.

In this abode of ancient peace we could have spent hours not only pleasantly, but with the knowledge that here, as in



THE COURTYARD OF ST. JOHN'S HOSPITAL, BRUGES





many other places in this charming old town of Bruges, one came into intimate contact with the spirit of the past, its beauty, and its sentiment.

Another medieval building well worth visiting, easily reached on one's way back from the *Hospice de la Poterie*, along the Quais, and then down the Rue Espagnole, or from the Grande Place by way of the Rue Flamande and Rue de l'Académie, is the Poorters' Loge, or "Citizens' Lodge," till recent years the Academy of Fine Arts. It was in the fourteenth century the resort of the citizens—in fact, a kind of club—and in connection with it was a tilting club, known as the "White Bears." The emblem is still to be seen in a niche at the corner of the buildings, wearing a collar and bearing a shield, upon which are hunting horns and spears (?), in its hands, and this figure is known to the townsfolk by the nickname of the "Oldest Citizen of Bruges." The present effigy is not the original (now in Archæological Museum), but a copy.

The "Lodge" was purchased in the year 1441 by the Municipality, and was in 1719 given up to the purposes of an Art School. The chief frontage has been greatly extended, and that on the north unhappily decorated with poor statues. The building is now intended to serve as a Record Office, or repository for Government documents.

Whilst in the Square of Jan Van Eyck, attention should be given to the fine white stone building on the north side, dating from 1477, and formerly the *Grand Tonlieu*, or office, of the collector of market dues, an important functionary with an arduous office. It was held by the Lords of Ghiselles, but ultimately, by marriage, the office passed to the Lords of Luxembourg, and Peter of that family built the present house. The beautiful porch bears the date 1477, but it is generally thought that the time of its erection is a year later. The upper story is now the public library. This contains some interesting manuscripts, an unusually fine collection of early-printed books dating prior to 1500, including several of Collard Manson, of Bruges, from 1475-1484. The famous Steinmetz collection of drawings and engravings should also at least be glanced at.

There are many of the old houses in the immediate neighbourhood of the Poorters' Loge.

From the Poorters' Loge it is but a few yards to the

*Musée Communal*, or *Académie*, in the Rue St. Catherine. In it are gathered some of the most interesting and valuable examples of Early Flemish art, including Memlinc's seventh picture at Bruges, and world-famed works of Van Eyck, Hugo Van der Goes, Gerard David, Jean Provost, Ant. Claeissens, Jacob Van Oost the elder, and others.

Naturally one comes to the Memlinc first. It is interesting to study as a completion of the works at the *Hôpital St. Jean*. This fine triptych, originally in the chapel of St. Christopher at St. Jacques, has for its central panel a representation of St. Christopher clad in a blue garment partly covered by a red cloak. The saint's face wears an astonished and perplexed expression, and is turned up so as to gaze at the infant Saviour seated on his shoulders. In the grotto is seen the hermit, lantern in hand, and leaning on his staff. To the right of the picture is St. Egidius with the doe, and on the left St. Maurus reading a book. The left wing contains a portrait of the Burgomaster, Willem Moreel, the donor, with his patron saint St. William and his five sons. On the left wing is depicted the donor's wife, Barbara Vlaendenbergh, with her patron saint St. Barbara, and no less than eleven daughters. In grisaille on the outer surface of the shutters are paintings of St. George and St. John the Baptist. The work is one of Memlinc's best, and the heads of the three saints in the central panel are particularly well drawn and painted with rare beauty. Unfortunately, the work has been greatly injured by the removal of the ancient varnish and by the passage of the years.

It is not without benefit that the painting, "The Baptism of Christ," by Gerard David, hanging on the occasion of our last visit opposite Memlinc's work, is compared with the triptych. The portraits of Jean de Trompes, the donor, his son, and his first wife, Elizabeth Van der Meersch, are boldly and well painted. The picture dates from 1508.

There is no space for detailed description of other works, many of which are, however, well worth attentive study, but we would advise the student to compare Jan Provost's "Last Judgment" (1525), the flames of which are by Pieter Pourbus, and the picture by the latter having the same subject. There will easily be seen the advance in sentiment and good taste that Pourbus's work exhibits. This artist's other works—portraits of Jan Fernagant and his wife,

Adriana de Buuc (1551), and the reredos, "The Descent from the Cross"—should be also noticed.

Ant. Claeissen's "Banquet at Bruges" (1574), and "Mars surrounded by the Fine Arts," with interesting distant view of the city, taken from beyond the *Minnewater* (1605), should not be missed; and the same remark applies to Pieter Claeissens the elder's works, "The Covenant of Tournai, May 22, 1584," remarkable for the excellence of the expression on the faces and the colouring.

In the south-western corner of the city, near the beautiful *Minnewater* and its ancient bridge, stands the *Béguinage of the Vineyard*, dating from the thirteenth century, a collection of picturesque, white-walled, and quaint houses, shadowed by ancient trees, and breathing quietude and peace. The Renaissance porch, with decorative paintings on the shingles of the roof, and church, are worth inspection; and, if for nothing else than because of the strange old-world charm of the grassy, tree-shaded enclosure, across which "Sisters," in their flowing robes and white head-dresses, flit, the place is worth a visit.

In the house of the *Grande Dame*, or Lady Superior, are some interesting and quaint pictures and furniture. The chapel contains a plain brass tomb of Margaret Van Ruwescure, dating from the end of the fourteenth century.

From the courtyard of the *Béguinage* there is a beautiful vista of the elegant spire of Notre Dame, which composes into a charming picture above and beyond the high-pitched gables of the white-walled almshouses.

No one should miss the walk under the trees beside the *Minnewater*, the romantic and poetical name given to the pool which was dug at the junction of the Reye and Zwin. It dates from time out of mind, and was, in 1330, enlarged so as to serve as a dock when the Canal was dug through Bruges from Ghent to Ostend. The present picturesque bridge, which spans the upper end of the lake, was built in the middle of the eighteenth century, replacing the long, ancient, wooden structure that had served the townsfolk from the end of the fourteenth till the end of the sixteenth century. The view from the bridge in either direction is charming: towards the town stretches the fine sheet of water, its surface broken by water-lilies and the stately passage of swans; and in the other direction there is a



pleasant vista of the country beyond across the canal. As is the case along the quaint old quays, artists abound, either painting the distant town, the remaining bridge tower (dating from 1401, and placed there by John Van Oudenarde and Martin Van Luevene, the beautiful sylvan scene, or the time-worn *Hongersnoodmolen* ("Famine Mill"), built in 1481, and recently restored and enlarged.

Although both the old church of St. Walburga and that of Jerusalem may well be visited if time permit—and they have several points of interest for the student of architecture—there is no need to describe either building in detail here. There is, indeed, so much in Bruges which is worth discovery by the curious, so much of charm that is indescribable and untranslatable in cold print, that one leaves the beautiful old town again and again after a visit with a sense of incomplete knowledge which is as fascinating as it is in a sense disappointing.

At every street corner, in almost every obscure alley, is something worth careful investigation by the true vagabond, antiquary or artist. And along its Quais, and in the neighbourhood particularly of the famed Quai du Rosaire are those quaint and picturesque out-door markets of the flotsam and jetsam as it were of ancient houses, cottages, and buildings. The curious brazen bells, old armour, quaint Flemish pottery, carved woodwork, images of battered saints, brass and wooden crucifixes, pots, milk-cans, and odds and ends of other metal work which seldom fail to arrest the progress of the curious sightseer sauntering beneath the trees beside the now deserted waters of the canals.

Then round a corner and one comes upon that most grievous sight for the bibliophile, piles of fragments of old books mingling with modern ones of no account. A few pages of a sixteenth-century volume on ecclesiastical doctrine or science rubbing shoulders with a stained and tattered reprint of a popular English or French novel. An ancient calf-bound tome upon husbandry side by side with a gaudy-covered *Carte des Songes* or brochure upon hydrostatics.

A bundle of back numbers of *La Vie Parisienne* jostling against Dante's "Inferno" in parts, with plates by Gustave Doré.

But as one watches the tourist and American curiosity-hunters eagerly inspecting, turning over, and handling the



A CANAL, AND VISTA OF NOTRE DAME, BRUGES





brazen flotsam and jetsam spread out on the flags or cobbles beneath the trees alongside the Dyver, one remembers that it is not all ancient brass that shines so dully, or that has verdigris thick upon it. Some has come from Birmingham, or at least when new from the shops near the Quai St. Anne, to meet the purchaser in an alluring and seductive environment, backed up by many protestations regarding its genuineness by buxom lady vendors, which may well deceive the unwary.

Bruges is not without its quaint cafés and *cabarets* which the sojourner who has artistic or Bohemian tastes, or who cares for "atmosphere," will surely (as did we) discover. In these one gets in touch with life of the less known sort of artists and dreamers of which there are not a few in Bruges.

To the quaint *Vlissinghe Taverne*, with its picturesque courtyard, its charming gables and time-worn, tiled roof, its low-ceiled chambers and memories of Rubens, who used to haunt it, many yearly come. It lies not far from the Poorters' Loge in the Rue des Blanchisseurs, a narrow by-street which skirts the right bank of the canal. It is most easily reached from the Place Van Eyck along the Quai Spinola. Here one can get good coffee and good wine; and rest a while and smoke and muse of other days when the surrounding houses held the prosperous citizens and merchants of the great commercial Bruges, and sailors with the breath of salt sea clinging to them trod the neighbouring streets.

Of less account artistically, but redolent of the unconventional, is the *Maison Noire* in the Rue des Tonneliers. It dates from the fifteenth century, and, if legend and history lie not, is steeped in tragedies which were common enough in the Middle Ages in such haunts. In its large room, in which more than one fierce duel was fought by the uncertain light of swaling candles to a fatal issue, and the inner chamber used for meetings, are still found some excellent specimens of old Flemish furniture, which give an old-time atmosphere to the rooms. Through the *Porte des Moulins*, and into the Rue Longue, which is not ill-named, and one comes to a café known as *Le Lion Belge*, little frequented by the tourist, we fancy, who usually confines his explorations to the circuit of the *Vieux Bourg*, and immediately adjacent streets of the Grande Place. It is the haunt of military officers by day and bohemian poets, painters, and diletantes by night. On the

walls hang many paintings—some of merit, some impressionist studies of great boldness—and there are odds and ends of brass, of carvings, of gridirons, and less considered trifles to “intrigue” the eye, as a French friend put it.

It is a place worth visiting if you are curious, Bohemian in taste and a student of character, if only for the late walk back to the civilization and semi-modernity of the hotel and Grande Place along streets that are silent under the moon full early, even on a summer night.

Bruges presents quite another aspect to the sojourner—and one that we may well carry away with us—on a fine Saturday night in summer. Then there is an excellent band playing good music, either in the vastness of the Grande Place, envired by antiquity, and awakening martial echoes linked to historic memories, or in the open space in front of the theatre in the Rue Flamande. Then the ancient Place and streets in the vicinity, at least for a time, appear crowded and instinct with bustling, joyous life, which, when the band pauses in its music-making, seems just a little out of character as one gazes upward at the tranquil, deep-blue vault of the evening sky silhouetting ancient roofs and quaint gables.

Truly, to know Bruges *la Morte* one must dwell and linger in her, becoming a part not only of her spasmodic life and gaiety, but also of her dulness. Knowing not alone her treasures and architectural charms, but the decay and disintegration which has set its seal upon so much that is desirable and historically interesting.

One could not, indeed, turn one's face towards the sea and journey the few miles of pleasant road which lies between Bruges and Ostend on one's homeward way, with more fragrant and pleasant recollections than have been conjured up by this “dear old dead town,” the memories of which will dwell with one when at last separated by “the waste of waters,” which divides this land of historic charm and picturesqueness from our own.

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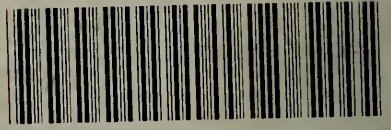
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